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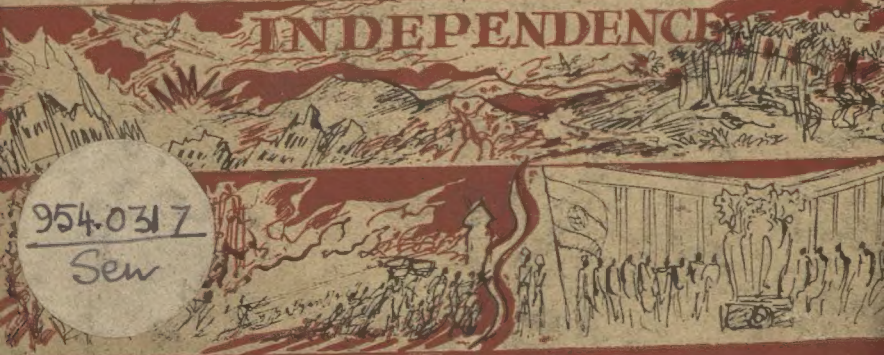
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OF THE INDIAN WAR OF



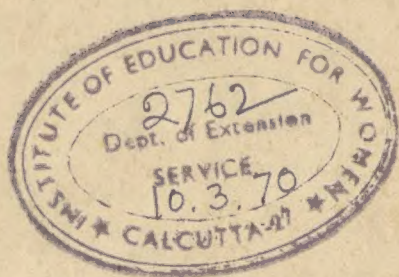
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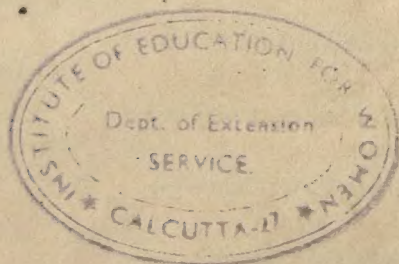
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struggle through the ages.*



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of those who returned  
that day in the garden  
through the night.

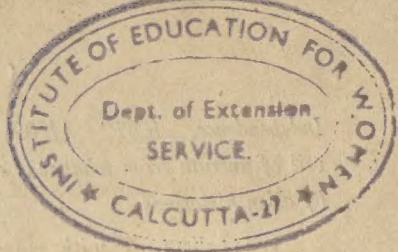
# CONTENTS

	Page
A lesson from great the uprising	
—Dr. Rajendra Prosad...	9
The result of Indian War of Independence	
—Jawahrlal Nehru...	14
1857—The Dividing line of Indian History	
—K. M. Panikkar...	20
Why 1857 War was a National War ?	
—V. D. Savarkar...	32
Causes of Indian War of Independence	
—Moulana Abul Kalam Azad...	33
1857—Its nature	
—Dr. M. L. Roy Choudhury...	55
Effects of Indian War of Independence	
—Asoka Mehta...	58
Ranee Lakshmibai of Jhanshi	
—Sm. Yamuna Sheorey...	69
Shahzada Firoz Shah	
—Dr. Surendra Nath Sen...	77
Random thought on 1857 War	
—Kamalapati Tripathi...	81
A Salute to 1857	
—Bhupati Majumder	89
1857—Fact And Fiction	
—Dr. R. N. Nagar...	93



	Page
The Cost and Consequence of 1857	
1857—Some Reflections	—S. S. Apte...99
Mutiny Days in Calcutta	K. A. Subramania Iyer...109
1857—A Salute	—B. V. Roy...115
How Sepoy Mutiny Reacted on Russia	—Guy A. Aldred...122
Neighbours And Comrades In-Arms	—P. Shastitko...126
Our First National War	—Ting-Tse-liang...132
The Reaction of Rebellion in Bengali Mind	—Amalendu Dasgupta...136
The landmarks of 1857	—Bimal Chandra Sinha...159
	...185





## From Editor's Pen

*The Historians are yet to reach an agreed conclusion whether the influence of the events of 1857 on the people of the country was considerable and it gave them a sense of nationalism—whether Nana Saheb, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Tantia Topi, Kunwar Singh, Bahadur Shah and their chief lieutenants were heroes and deserve to be idolised by their countrymen. Let this subject matter of controversy be put to an end and a true history come out. This little venture of ours is an honest and faithful attempt to present not only a true and correct picture of so many events and incidents that occurred during the 1857 war but also to introduce to the reader opinions from different school of thought. Here, in this book, great leaders, historians and thinkers have generously favoured us with their valued contributions on the subject which enrich this anthology. This book is not merely a history, it may be used as a reference book by the historians and students, we except. Any suggestion to make this venture more useful would be welcomed by the editor.*

*We learn, the early accounts of 1857 war from British Historians—who were prejudiced about Indian life and condition. Their accounts are mostly condemnatory of the movement. Veer Savarkar in his monumental book "The Indian War of*

*Independence, 1857"* (1909) came forward and opened the veil of untruth from what was so long dubbed as Sepoy Mutiny by alien historians.

We believe as with many other leaders and workers that the heroic sons and daughters of the Indian soil who challenged the British in 1857 did not die in vain. They created a tradition which nourished the new born ideal of freedom into maturity. Their supreme sacrifice inspired successive generations of patriots, to wage relentless war of liberation against the British in India.

The editor should like to record his deep sense of obligations to S<sup>j</sup> Anil Kumar Bhattacharya for all possible assistance from his end. S<sup>j</sup> Dilip Sen offered many valuable suggestions for which the editor is grateful.

We do not know how far we have succeed in making this venture a success. It is the readers and well-wishers who will point out the merits and defects of the book for our future guidance. Still an apology is needed. There was little of planning about the editing due to very short time left at our disposal.

Our earnest appeal, therefore, to all its readers is that they should go through the book dispassionately and overlook the short-comings of the editor.

# A Lesson from the Great Uprising

*By* Dr. Rajendra Prosad

It is just one hundred years from to-day that as a result of the countrywide discontent against the rule of the British East India Company, India witnessed a great uprising. By whatever name one may be inclined to designate it, the movement of 1857-59 was not purely accidental. The people of India had never accepted the rule of the East India Company with alacrity.

The East India Company had established its rule gradually, almost imperceptibly, as a result of internecine dissensions. It was not long before the populace began to realise its evil consequences, with the result that while in one part of the country the Company was extending its possessions there were risings in other parts against its rule. It would indeed be hard to say if there was any span of time between 1757 and 1857 when in one part of the country or another Indians did not rise against the Company or demonstrate their resistance to its rule in a

practical way. There were reasons for it. The East India Company and its officials had monopolised all trade, depriving local traders of all business facilities or reducing them to the status of the agents of the Britishers. The Company had deprived many of their ancestral lands by enacting various laws in different parts of the country, one of which was the authority to auction the entire land in case of default of payment of land revenue. An altogether new set of laws and the new expensive and time-wasting law Courts from which justice was difficult to get, ruined a large number of people. The new taxes imposed by the Company were realised with relentless harshness. The Christian missionaries had caused distress among the people by their proselytizing propaganda. New laws and practices like the ban on the Sati custom, retention of rights to ancestral and other property even after conversion to another religion, the introduction of new type of cartridges which it was thought contained animal fat and which the Sepoys were forced to bite with their teeth—all these led to the widespread impression that behind these happenings was the intention to convert the whole country to Christianity. Again, the East India Company's policy of an-



nexation which led to the extinction of several Indian States and their merger with the Company's territory, their policy of grabbing whatever they could lay their hands upon and lastly the destruction of the cottage and small-scale industries which affected the rich and the poor alike—on account of all these a situation developed which caused widespread discontent throughout the country and many people resolved in their hearts to bring the rule of the Company to an end, even if some of these did so to protect their own interests. On the other hand, the East India Company was getting more powerful and it was becoming clear that it would not be possible to challenge its might without a collective and organised effort.

The latter half of the 18th and the first quarter of the 19th century saw movements in different parts of the country to overthrow or at least arrest the growing power of the Company. It is a historical fact that the Movement of 1857 was the most determined and widespread of the risings which had taken place till then against the East India Company. There is little wonder therefore if writers and historians have described this movement as a National War of Independence.

The rising which began in Meerut and which later on engulfed the whole of the present Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and parts of Madhya Pradesh and the Punjab need not be elaborated here, but it has to be admitted that behind these happenings was the feeling of discontent caused by the Company's misdeeds and that many of those who took active part in this movement were moved by patriotic motives. Besides, the injury caused to the people's religious susceptibilities also provoked many to join and reinforce the movement.

The revolt of 1857-59, besides bringing in bold relief the incontrovertible fact of resistance against foreign domination, also threw up quite a few personalities which have since come to be regarded as symbols of heroism and opposition to alien rule. Tantya Tope, Ahmed Ullah, Kunwar Singh and Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi may be mentioned among them. Another significant fact which emerges from the happenings of 1857-59 is the remarkable sense of unity among Hindus and Muslims and the complete absence of communal feeling throughout the movement. Soon after the outbreak of fighting, the rebels or registers were moved by the feeling that they had a common end to achieve and a

common cause to serve. Even in the midst of the tangled history of the uprising, the community of interests among Indians is clearly discernible. It is a fact which cannot be lost sight of.

When we view those happenings to-day dispassionately and objectively, it is possible that some of those causes which led to popular discontent are not looked upon as altogether bad or objectionable. It is not however the question as to what we think of those things to-day after lapse of 100 years. The thing to be taken into account is that those incidents and innovations had a very unfavourable reaction on the minds of the people at that time and they thought that the Company's moves were calculated not only to deprive Indians of their wealth, property, religious beliefs and freedom, but to make short shrift of them. We must also learn that unlimited self-sacrifice is essential for attaining independence and retaining it.\*

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\* *Message to the Nation from A. I. R.*

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# The Result Of Indian War Of Independence

*By* Jawaharlal Nehru

In India the old economic order was already breaking up when the British came. Feudalism was cracking up. Even if no foreigners had come to India then, the feudal order could not long have survived. As in Europe, it would have given place slowly to a new order under which the new productive classes had more power. But before this change could take place, when only the break-up had occurred, the British came and without much difficulty, stepped into the breach. The rulers they fought in India and defeated belonged already to a past and vanishing age. They had no real future before them. The British were thus, under the circumstances, bound to succeed. They hastened the end of the feudal order in India; and yet strangely, as we shall see later, they tried to prop it up outwardly and thus put obstacles in the way of India's progress towards the new order.

Thus the British became the agents of a historical process in India—the process which was to change feudal India into the modern kind of industrialized capitalist State. They did not realize this themselves; and certainly the various Indian rulers who fought them

knew nothing about it. An order that is doomed seldom sees the signs of the times, seldom realizes that it has fulfilled its purpose and its function and should retire gracefully before all powerful events force it into undignified retreat, seldom understands the lesson of history, and seldom appreciates that the world is marching on, leaving it behind in the "dustbin of history" as somebody has said. Even so, the Indian feudal order did not realize all this and fought unavailingly against the British. Even so, the British in India and elsewhere in the East to-day do not realize that their day is past, the day of Empire is past, and that the world marches onward relentlessly pushing the British Empire into the "dustbin of history."

But the feudal order that prevailed in India, when the British were spreading out, made one more final effort to recover power and drive out the foreigner. This was the great revolt of 1857. All over the country there was a great deal of dissatisfaction and discontent against the British. The East India Company's policy was to make money and to do little else ; and this policy, added to the ignorance and rapacity of many of its officers, had resulted in widespread misery. Even the British Indian army was affected, and there were many petty mutinies. Many of the feudal chiefs and their descendants were naturally bitter against their new masters. So a great revolt was organized secretly. This organization spread especially round about the United Provinces and in Central India, and yet, so blind are the British people in India to what Indians

do or think, the government had no inkling of it. Apparently a date was fixed for the revolt to begin simultaneously in many places. But some Indian regiment at Meerut went ahead too fast and mutinied on May 10, 1857. This premature outburst upset the programme of the leaders of the revolt, as it put the government on their guard. The revolt, however, spread all over the United Provinces and Delhi and partly in Central India and Bihar. It was not merely a military revolt; it was a general popular rebellion in these areas against the British. Bahadur Shah, the last of the line of the great Moghals, a feeble old man and a poet, was proclaimed by some as Emperor. The Revolt developed into a war of Indian Independence against the hated foreigner but it was an independence of the old feudal type, with autocratic emperors at the head. There was no freedom for the common people in it, but large numbers of them joined it because they connected their miserable condition and poverty with the coming of the British, and also in some places because of the hold of the big landlords. Religious animosity also urged them on. Both Hindus and Mohammedans took full part in this war.

For many months British rule in North and Central India hung almost by a thread. But the fate of the Revolt was settled by the Indians themselves. The Sikhs and the Gurkhas supported the British. The Nizam in the south, and Scindia in the North, and many other Indian States, also lined up with the British. Even part from these defections, the Revolt had the seeds of



failure in it. It was fighting for a lost cause, the feudal order ; it had no good leadership ; it was badly organized, and there were mutual squabbles all this time. Some of the rebels also sullied their cause by cruel massacre of the British. This barbarous behaviour naturally set up the British people in India, and they paid it back in the same coin, but a hundred and a thousand times multiplied. The English were especially incensed by a massacre of English men and women and children in Cawnpore, treacherously ordered, it is stated after promise of safety had been given, by Nana Sahab, a descendant of the Peshwa. A memorial well in Cawnpore commemorates this horrible tragedy.

In many an outlying station the English were surrounded by crowds. Sometimes they were treated well more often badly. They fought well and bravely against great odds. The siege of Lucknow stands out, coupled with the names of Outram and Havlock, as an example of British courage and endurance. The seige and fall of Delhi in September 1857 marked the turing point of the Revolt. Henceforth and for many months afterwards the British crushed the Revolt. In doing so they spread terror every where. Vast numbers were shot down in cold blood ; large numbers were shot to pieces from the mouth of cannon ; thousands were hanged from the wayside trees. An English general, Neill, who marched from Allahabad to Cawnpore, is said to have hanged people all along the way, till hardly a tree remained by the roadside which had not been converted into a gibbet. Prosperous villages were rooted out and destroyed. It is all a

terrible and most painful story, and I hardly dare tell you all the bitter truth. If Nana Saheb had behaved barbarously and treacherously, many an English officer exceeded his barbarity a hundred-fold. If mobs of mutinous Indian soldiers, without officers or leaders, had been guilty of cruel and revolting deeds, the trained British soldiers, led by their officers, exceeded them in cruelty and barbarity. I do not want to compare the two. It is a sorry business on both sides, but our perverted histories tell us a lot about the treachery and cruelty on the Indian side, and hardly mention the other side. It is also well to remember that the cruelty of a mob is nothing compared to the cruelty of an organised government when it begins to behave like a mob. Even to-day, if you go to many of the villages in our province, you will find that the people have still got a vivid and ghastly memory of the horrors that befell them during the crushing of the Revolt.

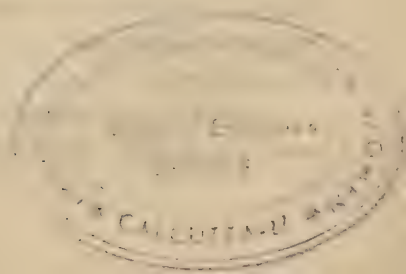
In the midst of the horrors of the Revolt and its suppression, one name stands out, a bright spot against a dark background. This is the name of Lakshmi Bai, Rani of Jhansi, a girl widow, twenty years of age, who donned a man's dress and came out to lead her people against the British. Many a story is told of her spirit and ability and undoubted courage. Even the English general who opposed her has called her the "best and bravest" of the rebel leaders. She died while fighting.

The Revolt of 1857-58 was the last flicker of feudal India. It ended many things. It ended the line of

the Great Moghal, for Bahadur Shah's two sons and a grandson were shot down in cold blood, without any reason or provocation, by an English officer. Hodson, as he was carrying them away to Delhi. Thus, ignominiously, ended the line of Timur and Babar and Akbar. The revolt also put an end to the rule of East India Company in India.\*

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\* *Froms "Glimpces of the World History."*



# 1857—The Dividing line of Indian History

*By* K. M. Panikkar

The conquest of India by Britain was a slow process. From the siege of Arcot (1748) which was the first intervention of the English East India Company in the local political affairs of India to the conquest and annexation of the Punjab in 1848, it took a century of warfare and diplomacy for the British to gain uncontested paramountcy in India.

Not only was the process slow but it was for nearly half a century operated under the cover of local forms and political institutions that the country at large did not for a considerable time realize that its political independence had been lost. In Arcot where the original intervention took place, the Company had acted in the name and under the authority of the local governor. In Bengal, they had merely been invested by the Moghul Emperor with revenue administration which they carried on in his name. With other rulers, like the Nawab of Oudh, they had entered into political agreements. Till 1837, it was the Moghul coinage that was in use ; it was in Persian that official correspondence was conducted.

Further, more than half of India before 1848 was still under the direct rule of Indian sovereigns who



had not yet passed finally under the authority of the Crown. In 1840, India was still but half conquered, for across the Sutlej was the powerful kingdom of the Punjab. In Central India, the great Maratha State of Gwalior was still considered independent, and in the Gangetic valley, the Kingdom of Oudh maintained the titles, dignities and symbols of a sovereign State. In fact the interior of India was still under Indian rule.

The twelve years between 1844 and 1856 witnessed a sudden change in this situation. A *coup d'etat* reduced Gwalior to a position of dependence. The kingdom of the Punjab was conquered and brought under control in 1845 and later annexed in 1848. Under the masterful Governor-Generalship of Lord Dalhousie many of the smaller kingdoms of India were taken over on one pretext or another and finally the kingdom of Oudh, the last vestige of independent Muslim rule, was annexed in 1856. Independent Indian authority practically vanished during this period and though two-fifths of India still continued to be under Indian rulers effective authority had passed from them. India finally awoke to the fact that she was a conquered nation.

This realization generated a great deal of discontent especially among the classes who were dispossessed of their power, dignity and authority; especially among the Maharattas and the Muslims, the two peoples who had enjoyed imperial power. The Muslims had been the ruling class in India in the Gangetic Valley for over 500 years. They found all of a sudden that their power had vanished for ever; that even the last remnants of

their glory had disappeared with the annexation of Oudh. The Maharattas, who had contested with the British the supremacy of India, found that their position was no better. The landowners, the feudal chiefs, the classes which enjoyed hereditary prestige, were all made to realize that the country had lost its freedom and was now under alien rule.

This growing disaffection by itself would perhaps not have led to any great outbreak but for the discontent in the army. The instrument which British had forged for the conquest of India was the sepoy army—an army recruited in India, but officered in its higher ranks by Europeans. In a hundred battlefields—in India and outside—it had proved its discipline and valour and loyalty. It had over a hundred years of tradition and the British had come to take its loyalty for granted, though at Vellore fifty years previously when a religious issue was involved the sepoy units had turned on their officers and showed that they had other loyalties also. But that was fifty years ago and the lesson had been forgotten. The army had become agitated about two things : about its allowances and its religion. The allowances of the sepoys for fighting outside India had been cut down. To add insult to injury a new Act had also been passed which made it obligatory for all who enlisted in the Bengal Army to be ready for service outside India.

Though the religious issue came to the forefront only with the introduction of the greased cartridges for the Enfield rifles there had been some time past a

noteable suspicion that the British authorities were contemplating Christianization of India. Some of the early Christian missionaries were very aggressive in their attitude to Hindu and Muslim religions, and in many places government had resumed grants of villages and revenues made by previous rulers to Hindu temples. This had caused considerable apprehension among the public and when it came to be rumoured that the cartridges meant for the new rifles were greased with the fat of cows and pigs, both the Hindu and Muslim sections in the army felt that a direct attack was being made on their religion with a view to converting them to Christianity.

The official and generally accepted date for the starting of the Mutiny is May 10, 1857. It was on that day that the troops in Meerut openly revolted, attacked their officers, burnt their houses and stormed the jails and released the prisoners. The next morning the rebels captured Delhi, a spectacular success which sent a thrill all over India. Bahadur Shah, the shadow Emperor of Delhi, an intelligent and distinguished old man, and noted poet, was proclaimed Emperor. For over half a century the Emperor had exercised no authority anywhere. The very symbols of his sovereignty had practically vanished during this period. The titles which he granted were no longer recognized. The coins were no longer issued in his name and Company had even thought of removing him from his ancestral palace to the outskirts of Delhi. And yet North India cherished the name of the Padishah whose symbolic re-instatement

on the throne helped to give a national character to the movement. Within three weeks the whole of Hindustan had risen up in arms. By the first week of June, Indian soldiers in most cantonments had followed the pattern of operations set at Meerut.

Though the spark was lit by the sepoys, the conflagration was spread by the activities of people outside the army. That is what gives the movement its national character. It was Nana Saheb, the son and heir of the Peshwa, that took over the leadership in Kanpur. It was Kunwar Singh, a Rajput Jagirdar, who headed the rebellion in Bihar. In Central India it was the Rani of Jhansi who organized and led the movement.

Also, it is important to remember that apart from the three Sikh princes, who had been saved from absorption into the Punjab Kingdom by the British, almost all the the princes of North India were sympathetic to the rebels and, as the British well knew, only sat on the fence awaiting the outcome. The one notable exception was the Maharaja of Gwalior who even after his army had gone across to the rebels, joined the British in Agra and gave his moral support to the reconquest of his capital.

During the hundred years of struggle, the English authorities had in most cases only to face the ill-organized armies of Indian rulers. No doubt in some cases as in the war against the Mahrattas and the first war against the Kingdom of the Punjab the Company had to undertake major campaigns on more or less equal



terms ; but generally speaking, the Indian wars had been easy affairs where their superior arms, discipline and leadership gained them cheap victories.

The Rebellion of 1857 was different in this respect. For the first time the British forces had to deal with a people's movement, no doubt dispersed and lacking in efficient organization, but widespread, covering practically the whole of North India. Thus, they had to face an unexpected situation for which they were not prepared in advance. For a few months the British authorities were paralysed, both by the unexpectedness of the blow and by the extensive nature of the conflagration. Soon, however, they recovered from the surprise and were able to concentrate on Indian forces meant even for other theatres of war and operate according to a carefully considered plan of action.

The advantages which the leaders of the Rebellion had were dissipated within the first four months. In Delhi, where the aged Bahadur Shah had been proclaimed Emperor, the quarrels between his sons and advisers prevented even effective steps being taken for the defence of the capital, let alone for the central direction of the movement. In Lucknow, where the national feeling was almost universal and the Rebellion was strongest, the national forces could not even capture the Residency, which was being defended by a small British force. Elsewhere, as in Arrah and Jhansi, the movement soon become a matter of isolated action by local leaders. The only major

force in the field was that organized by Tantya Tope in the name of Peshwa, which though ably led fought but poorly when it faced the advancing British armies.

The military aspect of the Rebellion was unimportant. The movement on the Indian side was too dispersed and without effective central direction to establish an alternative government or even to conduct an effective campaign. So after the first enthusiasm it degenerated into local fights, little rebellions all over the country, leading to a kind of general unsettlement all over North India. The only serious effort to challenge British military power was by the forces organized by Tantya Tope. Tantya was a leader of ability, and though he had a general idea of strategy he seems to have been unable to handle his troops in the field.

His associate, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, was a more heroic figure. With her own small forces she defended the fort of Jhansi for a time against overwhelming odds and when it became clear that Tantya was intercepted on his way to raise the siege and her own position in Jhansi became untenable she fought her way out to Kalpi, where the one major battle in the rebellion took place. Defeated in that battle, she along with Tantya raised Gwalior against his own Maharaja who returned to Agra with his courtiers, leaving the State and the citadel in the hands of the national forces.

The battle of Morar (Gwalior) was the last effective fight of the rebellion. There, the Rani dressed in male

attire was wounded while fighting heroically. Though Tantya escaped, he was never again able to give effective battle and was finally caught and hanged by the British.

If the leadership of the Indian side was poor and ineffective, it was no better on the side of the British. In Meerut where the Mutiny started, Hewitt, the British Commander, displayed strange indcision which, in spite of the overwhelming British forces under him, allowed the Indian regiments to take control of the town and march off quietly to Delhi. In Kanpur the inefficiency of Sir Hugh Wheeler was such that he wired on may 18: "All well at Kanpur...The plague in truth is stayed."

The civilian officers were no better. In fact, if the British finally overcame the rebellion, it was mainly due to the organized nature of the government, the central direction of their operations and the inability of the Indian side to produce within the first months of the movement an acceptable political programme which could have sustained the enthusiasm of the people.

The Rebellion and its suppression were stained by acts of wanton cruelty on both sides. Whatever the provocation, and they had many as we know now, the massacre of women and children in Kanpur and at other places by the rebels could not be justified. But the systematic "white terror" established by the British during and after the campaign was in some respects much worse. A recent writer unsympathetic to the Indian side speaks of Neill's atrocities in the following word: "History records few cruelties worse than those done by men who

have honestly called themselves servants of the God of Mercy."

Among the achievements of this servant of the God of Mercy is the destruction of a regiment, of loyal troops at Banaras, as he had no time to find out whether they were loyal or disloyal. Even more interesting is what came to be known as the Neill code under which every Indian who fell into British hands was assumed to be a mutineer and was asked to prove the contrary before a summary court martial. Neill's notorious order that the blood stains in Kanpur should be licked clean by mouth and that "the provostmarshal shall use the leash in forcing anyone objecting to complete the task" is worse than anything that recorded history of cruelty can show. He records with glee and thankfulness to God how "a Mohammedan officer of one Civil Court" was flagged as he objected to lick the blood with his tongue and forced him to do this repulsive act.

Havelock was not much better. John Nicholson, whom the British never ceased to count as a hero, even proposed a Bill "for flaying alive, impelement or burning" of those who were accused of murder. Even after the campaign was continued so as to teach the natives a lesson they would remember.

Thus ended the great Rebellion leaving behind it a heritage of hatred, suspicion and racial prejudice. Its effects were far-reaching. The English East India Company which had built up the empire ceased to exist



and the British Crown assumed direct responsibility for the government of India. The policy of the new government was no longer annexation of territory which for fifty years the Company had followed with ruthless determination, but to leave the unconquered parts of India under its own sovereigns—a system of indirect rule by which the government hoped to turn the princes of India into props of their empire instead of possible enemies. Also racialism became for a long time the basis of government, as the Mutiny had taught the lesson that the loyalty of a conquered people can never be safely assumed.

On the Indian side the failure of the movement had even more far-reaching results. For a time the spirit of the people was broken and a sense of fear dominated the the country. The feudal nobility and the dispossessed classes which had led the Rebellion ceased to count as leaders of the people, though they emerged again later as the supporters of British authority. When the national spirit found expression again two decades later, its leaders did not come from the dispossessed nobility or from the heir to the great traditions of the past but from a new middle-class—lawyers, teachers, journalists and men of business. Old India in fact perished in the great Rebellion.

How far was the Rebellion a national movement, a War of Independence? British historians and following them Indian text-book writers have been at pains to discount the national character of the Rebellion and to assert that it was no more than a mutiny of discontented

regiments, which was exploited by disaffected elements in the country. Their main arguments are that Bengal and the Punjab were virtually unaffected by the movement and in fact co-operated with the British ; that it did not spread to the South ; that even in the North support for the movement was not universal.

On the basis of arguments of this nature it could be proved that no movement unless it became successful is ever national. During the American War of Independence, for example, there was a considerable section of the people who claimed to be loyalists and chose to migrate to Canada rather than deny their allegiance to the Crown. Again so far as the great Congress movement in India was concerned, it was notorious that a considerable section of the princes of India "placed themselves and their resources at the disposal of the Crown" to help the British to suppress the agitation. Also it is a fact that in many area ruled by princes the national movement had not penetrated.

The decisive test of a national movement is whether its objective is the achievement of the country's freedom. On that question there could be no doubt. The expulsion of the British and the recovery of India's independence were the objectives of the Rebellion. That the independence the leaders visualized was a return to the old condition of divisions and anarchy does not alter the fact that it was a movement for independence and in that sense was a national struggle.

One further fact should be emphasized. The movement was national in the sense that it transcended

communal feeling. Hindus and Muslims worked hand in hand. Nana Saheb's chief adviser was a Muslim. The most loyal adherents of the Rani of Jhansi who manned her guns were Muslims. In Oudh the Hindu nobles had loyally supported the brave Queen Hazrat Mahal who headed the movement there. Hindu-Muslim rivalry which weakened the national movement at a later time had not raised its ugly head in 1857.

The Mutiny became the dividing line of Indian history, not only because the Crown assumed direct sovereignty, and responsibility for the Government of India, but because from the Indian point of view the *ancient regime* died with it. It cleared the ground for a national democratic movement. No longer did any one dream of restoring the Moghul Empire at Delhi, or the Mahratta Empire of Poona. On the side of the British there was a stiffening of opinion, a determination to ensure that the events of 1857 would not be repeated, a deliberate creation of a racial cult, an affirmation of their rights as conquerors. On the Indian side, a sense of separation, a growing sense of national unity, and a determination to build for the future which found expression in the Indian National Congress established in 1885 after the people had recovered from the effect of the period of terror. The Rebellion of 1857 was in a sense an essential prelude to Indian national unity for it swept away the political accretions of the past, and left the ground clear for the construction of a new India.

# Why 1857 War Was a National War?

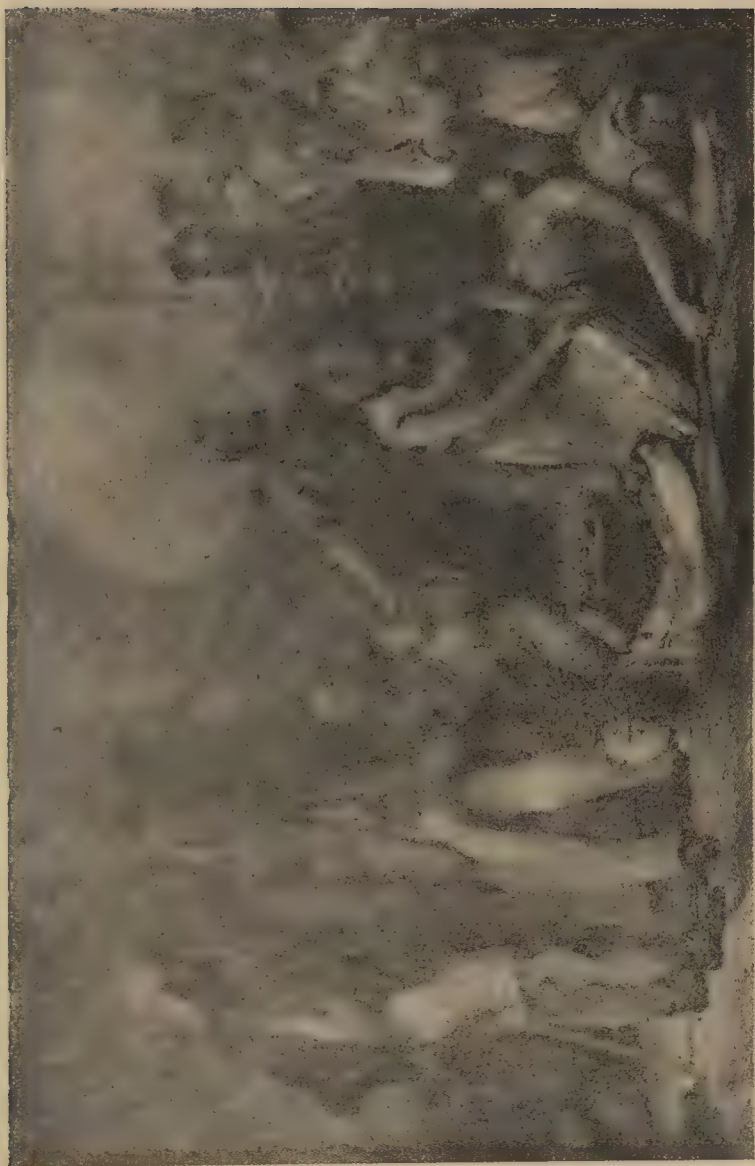
By V. D. Savarkar

The centenary of the 1857 War of Independence is being observed these days with great enthusiasm at innumerable places in Hindusthan. Fifty years ago, in the year 1907, it was regarded only as a "Sepoy Mutiny" and was everywhere condemned as a permanent dark blot in the history of Hindusthan owing to the atrocities committed by the mutineers. For the first time in that year, the Abinavh Bharat (New India) Society at London hailed it as a War of Independence and celebrated a golden anniversary and my book entitled "War of Independence 1857" was also published in the same year. This revolutionary struggle came to be rightly interpreted since then. Today there may be one in a lakh per chance who would be pedantic enough to insist on disparaging it as a "Sepoy Mutiny."

The discussion of the subject must needs be repeated at intervals, for the enlightenment of the general public about the main reasons that would stand historical scrutiny and would demonstrate why it was a national fight for freedom and not an insurrection of soldiers. It can hardly be right to expect common people to be able to go through personally, the ponderous volumes on such

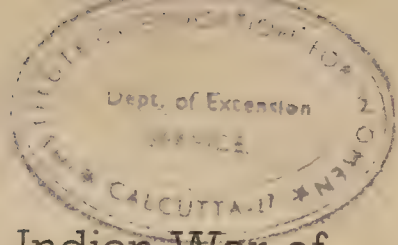
( Continued on page 170 )







**Tantia Topi**



# Causes of Indian War of Independence

*By* Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

The nature and scope of this great struggle was for long the subject of controversy both within and outside India. Almost all books dealing with the struggle represent it as a rebellion of the Indian Army against the constituted government of the day. Some Indian states, they concede, also joined in the revolt but these were states which nursed a grievance because of their annexation by Lord Dalhousie. The British Government, as the constituted authority of the land, suppressed the revolt and restored law and order.

Not one of the many books written on the subject has sought to interpret the events of 1857 in any other way. It may, however, be pointed out that the only legal title of the East India Company was to act as the Dewan or agent of the Moghul Emperor in revenue matters in respect of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The territories, the Company had since acquired, were by military conquest but nowhere had the Company challenged the suzerainty of the Emperor. When the army denied the authority of the Company, it appealed to the Emperor to resume his sway. It is, therefore, a debatable point if the revolt of the Indian Army can be regarded as a simple case of mutiny against the sovereign of the land. It may also be

mentioned that while most of these authors describe in detail the atrocities perpetrated by Indians on European men, women and children, very few refer to equal crimes against the Indians committed by the British.

I think special mention may be made of three-volume history of the uprising published early in the twentieth century. This was based on official records contained in the archives of the Imperial Records Department, now called the National Archives of India. It is now a general practice that official records are thrown open to research workers after about 50 years. This custom grew out of a decision of the United Kingdom about the records of the wars with Napoleon. Other countries of Europe have by and large accepted this convention. 1907 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Indian revolt and perhaps the then Government of India felt that a history of 1857 should be written on the basis of official papers which were about to be released for research.

This history, though based on official records, deals with the struggle in the same spirit as books by other British authors. Only one new point came out in this publication\*. The author† has clearly stated that so far as Oudh was concerned, the struggle had in it the elements of uprising. Oudh had only recently been taken over by the Company from an Indian king, and the people were resentful of this act of aggression. They, therefore, felt justified in rising against the Company which had

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\* Eighteen Fifty-Seven

† Dr. Surendra Nath Sen

acted unjustly towards Oudh. The national character of the rising in Oudh was, however, no new discovery. Lord Canning, in his official despatches, had himself stated that the struggle in Oudh was in a real sense a national uprising. The author of the book had therefore no difficulty in repeating what Lord Canning had already admitted. The author has also pointed out that the lenient treatment meted out to the Talukdars of Oudh after the suppression of the uprising was at least in part due to the recognition of this fact.

I realise how difficult it is to write an objective account of events which have aroused so much passion in the past. It is not easy for an individual to hold the balance even as he is influenced by personal, racial, or national feelings. Nevertheless, this must be his constant endeavour if he is to be a historian in the true sense. I also concede that an objective history of uprising was more difficult to write before India became free. There are two factors which make the task more feasible today. The events we are to study are already a hundred years old. The poignancy which attached to them when they were fresh has been largely lost. We can look today on the hates and strifes of the actors with the detachment born out of distance in time. In addition, the incentive to make political capital out of these far-off events is gone. The bitterness which characterised Indo-British relations in the past is no more. The atmosphere today is such that the events of 1857 can be studied dispassionately and objectively and without seeking to condemn or condone the faults of either party to the struggle.



It is noteworthy that no Indian of that period has written anything which can be regarded as an account of the struggle from an Indian point of view ; but if we think over the matter, this is not surprising. We know that the struggle was suppressed with great violence and for many years there was an atmosphere of terror in the country. Hundreds were executed without trial. There was hardly any region in Northern India where corpses, hanging from gibbets, did not remind the people of the vengeance of the Government. No Indian dared at that time to speak or write freely about the events of 1857. A few Indians who were servants or supporters of the Government have left some account but nobody who wanted to write freely and frankly had the courage to do so.

Evidence of how the Indian mind was terrorised is clear from the case of one man, Mirza Mainuddin. He was a Sub-Inspector of Police in the suburbs of Delhi during the uprising. He fled to Persia and returned after two years. At the request of Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, whose life he had saved during the uprising, he wrote an account of his experiences but handed over the manuscript to Metcalfe on the express condition that it must not be published so long as he was alive. There is hardly one word against the Government in his book which only describes how he himself fared during this period. Even then the fear which possessed him was so great that it was only under the condition mentioned above that he would hand over the manuscript to Sir Theophilus Metcalfe. He kept his word and prepared

an English translation of the book only after he heard of Mainuddin's death. The book could not, however, be published during Metcalfe's life.

The question has often been asked as to who were responsible for the uprising. Suggestions have sometimes been made that there was a group of planners who prepared a scheme according to which the Movement was launched. I must confess that I have grave doubts on the point. During the struggle and in the years immediately thereafter, the British Government carried out careful enquiries into the origin and causes of the uprising. Lord Salisbury said in the House of Commons that he for one was not prepared to admit that such a widespread and powerful movement could take place on an issue like the greased cartridge. He was convinced that there was more in the uprising than appeared on the surface. The Government of India as well as the Government of Punjab appointed several Commissions and Boards to study this question. All the legends and rumours current in those days were carefully examined. There was the story about the circulation of messages through *chapatis*. There was also prophecy that British rule in India would last only a hundred years after the Battle of Plassey. In spite of long and searching enquiry, there is so far no evidence that the uprising had been pre-planned or that the army and the Indian people had entered into a conspiracy to overthrow the rule of the Company. This has been my belief for a long time and researches undertaken recently have yielded no new facts to make me change my view.

During the trial of Bahadur Shah, efforts were made to prove that he was a party to a pre-planned conspiracy. The evidence which was adduced did not convince even the British officers who conducted trial and will be dismissed as frivolous by any man with common sense. In fact the course of the trial made it clear that the uprising was as much a surprise to Bahadur Shah as to the British.

Some Indians have written on the struggle in the early years of this century. If the truth is to be told, we have to admit that the books they have written are not history but mere political propaganda. These authors wanted to represent the uprising as a planned war of independence organized by the nobility of India against the British Government. They have also tried to paint certain individuals as the organizers of the revolt. It has been said that Nana Saheb, the successor to the last Peshwa Baji Rao, was the master-mind behind the uprising and established contacts with all Indian military establishments. As evidence of this, it is said that Nana Sahed went to Lucknow and Ambala in March and April 1857, and the struggle started in May 1857. This can hardly be regarded as conclusive evidence. The mere fact that Nana Saheb toured Lucknow and Ambala some time before the uprising cannot be regarded as evidence that he planned it.

How baseless some of these conjectures are become clear when we find that these historians regard Ali Naqi Khan, Wazir of Oudh, as one of the chief conspirators. Any one who had made a study of the history of Oudh

will regard this suggestion as ridiculous. Ali Naqi Khan was completely the henchman of the East India Company. He was the man on whom the British relied in their efforts to persuade Wajid Ali Shah to give up his kingdom voluntarily. General Outram, the British Resident, had promised generous rewards to Ali Naqi Khan if he succeeded in his mission. Ali Naqi Khan was so persistent in his efforts that Wajid Ali Shah's mother became apprehensive that he might secure his end by some subterfuge. She, therefore, took the state seal in her own possession, kept it in the zenana and issued orders that it should not go out without her orders. All these facts are well known in Lucknow and people there look upon Ali Naqi Khan as a traitor. To suggest that such a man was one of the master-minds behind the struggle is, on the fact of it, absurd.

It has also been said of Munshi Azimullah Khan and Rango Bapuji that they had prepared the plans for the uprising. Azimullah Khan was the agent of Nana Sahib and had been sent by him to London to plead his cause and secure for him the pension paid to Baji Rao. On his way back to India, he visited Turkey where he met Omar Pasha on the battle-field of Crimea. Similarly, Rango Bapuji had gone to appeal against another decision of Dalhousie regarding the incorporation of Satara into British India.

The fact that they had both been in London on such missions is regarded as pointing to their participation in the conspiracy. It is, however, clear that such suppositions are not evidence. Besides, even if they had talked

about these matters in London, this could not by itself justify us in describing them as the architects of the Revolt unless we can connect them with the events in India. There is no evidence of such connection and in the absence of records or testimony, we cannot regard them as having planned the uprising. After the capture of Bithur near Kanpur, the British secured possession of all the papers of Nana Saheb. The papers of Azimullah Khan also came into their possession. Among his papers, there was a letter addressed to but never sent to Omar Pasha, informing him that Indian soldiers had revolted against the British. Neither this letter nor any other paper of Azimullah Khan gives any indication that he had any time prepared plans for any uprising in India.

In the light of the available evidence, we are, therefore, forced to the conclusion that the uprising of 1857 was not the result of careful planning nor were there any master-minds behind it. What happened was that in the course of a hundred years the Indian people developed a distaste for the Company's rule. Since the Company had at first acted in the name of Nawabs or the Emperor, Indians did not for a long time realise that power had been captured by a foreign race, and they had been reduced to the position of slaves in their own country. Once this realization became widespread, the conditions were created for an outburst. This when it took place, was due not to the conspiracy of a few individuals or groups but to the growing discontent of large numbers of people.



If it be asked why the revolt of the Indian people was delayed for almost a hundred years, the explanation may be found in the following facts. The growth of British power in India has perhaps no parallel in history. It was not a case of outright conquest of one country by another, but a story of slow penetration in which the people of the land themselves helped the intruders. The fact that the incursion of the British into India was not in the name of the Crown helped to conceal the true nature of their activities. If the British Crown had from the beginning taken any direct part in Indian affairs, the Indians would have realised that a foreign power was entering the country. Because it was a trading Company, they did not think of it as a potential ruler. It also enabled the agents of the Company to behave in the way which no agent of the Crown could have done. An agent of the British Crown would have felt some hesitation in kowtowing to princelings and local potentates or officers of the Moghul Court. The agents of the Company had no such scruples. They bowed to the pettiest officials with the same readiness as any Indian trader. They indulged in bribery and corruption without any fear of being pulled up by their own ruler.

It is also noteworthy that for a long time the Company never acted in its own name. It always sided with some local Chief in order to advance its own interests. Thus the Company established its position in the South by supporting the claims of the Nawab of the Carnatic. Similary in Bengal, it acted in the name and under the authority of Nawab Nazim of Murshidabad. Even

after the Company became the virtual ruler of Bengal, it did not claim sovereignty. Clive approached the Emperor for the grant of Diwani rights and for decades the Company acted as the agents of the Emperor. Not only so but the Company followed the convention of Subadars and Governors of Provinces. These Governors in Provinces had their own seals, but always described themselves as the servants of the Moghul Emperor. The Governor-General of the Company also had his own seal, but described himself as the servant of Shah Alam, the Emperor of Delhi. The other Governors and Subadars waited on the Emperor in audience, made presents to him and received in return rewards from the Emperor. The Governor-General also waited on the Emperor and made a nazar of 101 guineas. In return the Emperor gave him a Khilat and Titles, and these titles were used by the Governor-General in all official documents. In this way the appearance of the sovereignty of the Emperor was kept up. The people did not for a long time realise how the Company was gradually becoming the real ruler of the land.

This process continued till about the second decade of the 19th century. By that time the rule of the Company had spread to the Sutlej. The Governor-General of the day, Lord Hastings, felt that the time had come to assert his power and gradually disown the Emperor. His first move was to request the Emperor that he should be allowed to sit down during his audience with the Emperor. He also asked for an exemption from the payment of Nazar. The Emperor rejected these requests, and for

the time being, the Governor-General did not press the point.

The Company then sought to undermine the prestige of the Emperor by encouraging the growth of kingdoms independent of Delhi. An approach was made to the Nizam of Hyderabad to declare himself a king. The Nizam did not agree, but the British found a more willing agent in the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh. Oudh thus ceased to be a province of the empire and became a kingdom disowning its allegiance to the Emperor.

By 1835, the Company felt strong enough to strike coins in which the Emperor's name was left out. This came to many people as a shock. They realised that from being mere traders or agents of the Emperor, the Company had in fact, become the ruler of the vast territories in India. 1835 also saw a decision to replace Persian by English as the language of the Court. All these had a cumulative effect and made the people aware of the change in the status of the Company. The shock of the discovery created a great disturbance in their minds and affected not only the civil population but also members of the armed forces.

We can get an idea of the situation as it existed in the thirties of the nineteenth century from a study undertaken by a distinguished British civilian of the day. The Hon'ble Frederick John Shore was the son of Sir John Shore and served in various capacities in the Police, the Revenues and the Judicial departments in the North-Western region of the Bengal Presidency. He contributed a series of articles anony-

mously to the *Indian Gazette*, one of the Calcutta daily papers, and latter in 1837 published them in book form under the title *Notes on Indian Affairs*. Shore has left us in no doubt about his appraisal of the public mind. He has repeatedly pointed out that even though outwardly everything was calm, the situation was charged with dynamite and it needed only a spark to start a violent conflagration. It was this simmering discontent which ultimately broke out in the outburst of 1857.

The growing discontent was aggravated by two measures which may be regarded as immediately responsible for the revolt of 1857. One of these was the new policy which was initiated by Mr. Thomason, Lt. Governor of the North-Western Province (afterwards Agra & Oudh). At first the Company had favoured a policy of maintaining or creating a class of land-lords who would be natural allies of the Government. Thomason was of a different view. He believed that the existence of big nobles and land-lords could be a source of danger to the Company. He was, therefore, of the view that the land-lords, as a class, should be eliminated and the Government should establish direct contact with the rayats. As a result of this new policy, the Company used every possible plea to dispossess nobles and land-lords and bring their tanants directly under it.

The second and perhaps the decisive factor was Dalhousie's policy by which he incorporated into British

territory one Indian state after another. India was at that time passing through the last phase of feudalism. Under the feudal system, loyalty was to the immediate superior, who was a land-lord or a noble. There was no sense of allegiance to the nation or the country. When people saw that the Indian states were being liquidated one after another and land-lords were being eliminated as a class, it came as a great shock to them. They felt that the Company was at last showing itself in its true colours and seeking to change the very structure of Indian social and political life. The discontent reached its peaks when Oudh was taken over by the Company. Oudh was a state which, for 70 years, had been a faithful ally of the Company. Never once during this period had Oudh acted against the Company's interest when in spite of this, the king was forced to abdicate and the state taken over by the Company, the people received a rude shock.

The effect of the dissolution of the kingdom of Oudh was the greater as a large proportion of the soldiers in the Bengal Army was drawn from this area. They had served the Company faithfully and been one of the major factors for extending its sway in different parts of the land. They suddenly realised that the power which the Company had acquired through their service and sacrifice was utilised to liquidate their own king. I have little doubt in mind that 1856, when Oudh was annexed, marked the beginning of a rebellious mood in the army generally and in the Bengal Army in particular. It was from this time that they



began to think that the Company's rule must be brought to an end. During the uprising, Lawrence and others who sought to find out the feelings of the ordinary Sepoy have left ample evidence in support of this view. The affair of the greased cartridge did not create a new cause of discontent in the Army, but supplied the occasion when the underground discontent came out in the open.

In the beginning, the East India Company had shown a great deal of regard for Indian susceptibilities. It sought to respect Indian feeling and treated the upper classes with great consideration. It was customary for members of the Governor-General's Council to receive and see off at the door not only noblemen but any Indian of a high social standing. As it became more powerful, its attitude changed and the Company paid less and less attention to Indian feeling. New laws were enacted without pausing to consider what the reaction would be on the Indian people.

It must, however be admitted that the Company often acted more in ignorance than in wilful contempt. Its affairs were administered by the Governor-General aided by a Council which consisted exclusively of Britishers. In fact, the idea of an Indian sitting on the Council would have shocked the Company. Nor was there any representative institution through which the rulers could sense the feeling of their subjects. In these circumstances, it had no means of knowing what the local people felt. The gulf between the Company and its subjects thus continually increased.

After reading the various accounts of 1857, certain conclusions appear to be inescapable. The question naturally arises if the uprising was the result of a nationalist upsurge alone. The answer cannot be an unqualified affirmative if nationalism is understood in its modern sense. There is no doubt that participants were moved by patriotic consideration, but these were not strong enough to provoke a revolt. Patriotism had to be reinforced by an appeal to religious passion before the people rose. The propaganda about the greased cartridges is only one instance of this. In other ways also the religious feelings of the soldiers had to be wounded before they were roused against their foreign masters.

Regarding the greased cartridges, it is clear from the papers of Fort William that the charge levelled against the Company was justified. Many of the other charges of religious interference were, however, baseless. It was freely rumoured that the Company had prohibited Sati because of its animus against the Hindu religion. There seems no justification for such a charge. Sati stopped because the rulers as well as enlightened Indian opinion of the day led by Raja Rammohan Roy realised that it as an inhuman institution. No civilized Government could tolerate that human beings should be burnt alive. Now that the passions of the struggle have subsided, no Indian would regard the prohibition of the Sati as a reasonable ground for revolt against the Company.

Equally baseless was the canard that the Company

ground cow bone and mixed it with flour to violate the religious beliefs of Hindu soldiers. No one with common sense will today accept such a charge but at the time canard was spread, a large number of credulous soldiers believed in it and were aroused to frenzy against the Company.

The East India Company had decided to provide western education to the Indian people and opened colleges and schools for the purpose. This again was done mainly in response to enlightened Indian opinion. Nevertheless the general public regarded such measures as a means of converting Indians to Christianity. The teachers in these institutions were called *Kala Padres* and subjected to social contempt. No one will today regard these measures for the introduction of western education as a cause for revolt.

As I read about the events of 1857 I am forced to the sad conclusion that Indian national character had sunk very low. The leaders of the revolt could never agree. They were mutually jealous and continually intrigued against one another. They seemed to have little regard for the effects of such disagreement on the common cause. In fact, these personal jealous and intrigues were largely responsible for the Indian defeat.

Bakht Khan, who assumed command in Delhi during the last stage of the struggle was an honest man. He was sincere in his efforts to win but all the other military leaders tried for an outright victory.

In contrast, the British fought with loyalty to their Queen. Men and women felt that it was a national



Kunwar Singh



Bahadur Shah



calamity against which they must fight whole-heartedly for survival and victory.

Equally significant is the fact that with a few honourable exceptions of whom the most distinguished were Ahmad Ullah and Tatya Tope, most of the leaders who took part in the struggle did so for the personal reasons. They did not rise against the British till their personal interests had been amaged. Even after the revolt had begun Nana Saheb declared that if Dalhousie's decisions were reversed and his own demands met, he would be willing to come to terms. The Rani of Jhansi had also her own grievances, but once she joined the fight, she never faltered and laid down her life in the cause she had espoused.

If this was the condition of the leaders of the uprising, one can easily imagine what could be the condition of the masses. They were very often mere spectators of the struggle and left their support to whichever side was more powerful at the moment. An idea of their attitude may be gained from the fate which overtook Tatya Tope. When he was finally defeated, he resolved to struggle back across the Narmada into Madhya Pradesh. He was convinced that once he reached the Maratha region, the people would offer him support. With almost super-human courage and tenacity, he eluded his pursuers and did cross the Narmada. When he reached the other bank, he could not find one village which would give him shelter. Everybody turned against him so that he had to fly again and resort to the forests. It was a professed friend who finally betrayed him while he was asleep.

One word about the atrocities that were perpetrated during this great uprising. British authors have often described in detail the many inhuman acts done by Indian soldiers and their leaders. It must be admitted with regret that some of these charges are justified. There is no defence whatever for the murder of European women and in some cases children in Delhi, Kanpur or Lucknow. Nana Saheb cannot perhaps be held responsible for not honouring the undertaking he had given to General Wheeler. He had lost control over the soldiers who took matters into their own hands. British historians have admitted that he was shocked when he found the dead body of a child floating in the water. None the less, Indian soldiers who professed to obey him committed these crimes. Also, he has a special responsibility for the prisoners who were killed just before Havelock reached the scene. It is said that he had them murdered in retaliation for the atrocities perpetrated by the British in Allahabad. One wrong does not however justify another. Nana Saheb must be held responsible for the murder of these helpless prisoners.

If the record of the Indians was tarnished by dark deeds, the British fared no better. British historians have generally sought to gloss over the British atrocities but some of them have left on record their sense of disgust at the terrible crimes perpetrated in the name of revenge. Hodson became a byword for bloodthirsty deeds. Neill prided himself on the fact that he strung hundreds of Indians without the semblance of a trial. Around

Allahabad, there was hardly a single tree without the corpse of an unfortunate Indian hanging from it. It may be that the British were gravely provoked but that was exactly what the Indians also said. If the conduct of many of the Indians was inexcusable, that of many of the British was equally so. Muslim noblemen were sewn alive in pigskin and pork forced down their gullets. Hindus were compelled to take beef under threat of death. Wounded prisoners were burnt alive. British soldiers went out to capture unfortunate villagers who were then tortured till death put an end to their misery. No nation or individual can indulge in such horrible atrocities and yet claim to be civilised.

Two facts stand out clearly in the midst of the tangled story of Rising of 1857. The first is the remarkable sense of unity among the Hindus and the Muslims of India in this period. The other is the deep loyalty which the people felt for the Moghul Crown.

The movement started on May 10, 1857., and continued for about two years. During this period there were many glorious as well as dark deeds perpetrated by the combatants on either side. There are instances of shining heroism and almost unbelievable cruelty. We do not, however, find during the whole of this period a single instance when there was a clash or conflict on a communal basis. All Indians—whether Muslim or Hindu—looked at things from the same point of view and judged events by the same standards.

This freedom from communal feeling was not the result of any special effort on the part of the leaders.

There is no indication whatever that the leaders of 1857 made any conscious attempt to stress Hindu-Muslim unity. Hindus and Muslims had developed friendly relation on a permanent basis as a result of the common life of centuries. There was, therefore, no occasion or need to make any appeal for unity for a particular cause. When one remembers that it was a time of high feelings and passionate excitement this absence of any communal conflict becomes even more significant. One may safely conclude that before days of British rule, there was no such thing as the Hindu-Muslim problem in India. Even before 1857 the British had tried to introduce the principle of 'divide and rule'. It is true that the British Crown had not assumed responsibility for governing India but since the Battle of Plassey a hundred years ago, the East India Company had become the paramount power in India. During these hundred years British officers had often stressed the differences between the different Indian communities. In the Despatches of the Directors of the Company it is again and again said that a distinction must be drawn between Hindus and Muslims. They felt that no reliance could be placed on the Muslims as their loyalty was open to question.

Todd's *Annals of Rajasthan* and Elliot's Introduction to his *History of India* make it clear that the East India Company wanted to stress the divisions between Hindus and Muslims. Both these men were high officials of the East India Company and they refer with contempt to Hindu historians who spoke highly of Muslim kings.

They have even expressed their surprise that a Hindu historian should praise the sense of justice and fairness of a Muslim ruler.

There is enough material in Todd's Annals to colour the history of the middle ages in a way which would poison the relations of Hindus and Muslims. Wherever there are two versions of a story, the one which is likely to embitter relations is preferred. Nevertheless, the incidents of 1857 prove that these attempts had not meet with the desired result. Common life had developed among Hindus and Muslims a sense of brotherhood and sympathy which was able to resist the indoctrination of hundred years. That is why the Struggle of 1857 took a national and racial but not a communal turn. In the fight for freedom, Hindus and Muslims stood shoulder to shoulder. Their common effort was to liberate themselves from the British yoke.

This feeling of unity was found not only in the army but also among the civil population. There is no record of a single incident of conflict or clash on a religious basis even though there are instances where British officers tried to weaken the Indian camp by stressing such differences.

India faced the trial of 1857 as a united community. How is it then that within a few decades communal differences became an obstacle to Indian nationhood? It is a tragedy of Indian history that this problem became more and more serious till at last a solution had to be found by partitioning the country on a communal basis.

The only explanation of these phenomena is to be found in the British policy after 1857. When the British



found that the communities stood shoulder to shoulder during these days of trial, they realised that the continuance of British rule depended on the breach of that unity. This conclusion becomes inescapable if one reads the contemporary British Despatches. It is also clearly seen in the re-organization of the army after the Rising had been suppressed. Not only was the division of martial and non-martial races introduced, but the army was re-organised on a new basis of checks and balances. Steps were taken to ensure that common action by Hindus and Muslims would in future be altogether impossible. The civil population was also subjected to a general policy which gradually turned Hindus against Muslims and Muslims against Hindus. Whenever any opportunity came to emphasize their differences, it was never ignored. How this principle worked in the army is clear from the autobiography of Lord Roberts.



# 1857—Its Nature

By Dr. M. L. Roy Choudhury, D. Litt.

*The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857* as a National Movement or as a War of Indian Independence has its official origin in the announcement of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. The Indian Education Minister announced during the annual session of the Indian Historical Records Commission 'the need of re-writing a new history of the great uprising of 1857'. It was a governmental affair. He invited Dr. S. N. Sen who had long served the Govt. of India as a Keeper of Records of the Imperial Secretariat and as the Director of Archives at New Delhi, was invited to write "a new and objective history of the movement of 1857." The background in the mind of the Maulana was to write a history of the Indian Independence movement from Indian standpoint.

The question was where to start from? When did Indian Independence movement begin, who began it, and where did it begin? Congress politicians wanted to begin it from the date of the birth of the Congress. Gandhites wanted to begin it from the arrival of Gandhi into the arena of Indian politics. Bengalees claimed that movement had its genesis in Rammohan, Bankim Chandra, in the Hindu Mela, in Vibekananda, Arabinda, Chittranjan and Subhas Bose.

They do not deny the contribution of Mahratta

nationalists like Thakur Sahib, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, nor of Punjabi heroes like Sardar Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai to the Independence movement in India.

Abul Kalam Azad, Education Minister of Independent India begins it from the sepoy mutiny.

The Rowlat Act in its introduction has carried the genesis of the movement of freeing India from the foreign yoke to the days of Shivaji who pleaded for *Go-Brahmana Hitaya* and Peshwa Baji Rao who stood for *Hindu-Pad-Padshahi*.

Recently after declaration of the secular policy of Indian Government, attempts are being to see everything in a secular way. So the Maulana discovered two secular facts which characterised the movement—"One is the birth of the remarkable sense of unity amongst the Hindus and Muslims of India, in this period. The other is the deep loyalty which the people felt for the Mughul Crown." (Foreward, XVII *Eighteen Fiftyseven*, 1957, by Dr. S. N. Sen. )

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, before he became Prime Minister of India, in an unguarded moment wrote—"Essentially it ( the Sepoy Mutiny ) was a feudal outburst headed by feudal chiefs and their followers and aided by wide-spread anti-foreign sentiment...It is clear, however, that there was a lack of nationalist feeling which might have found the people of India together." ( Nehru, *Discovery of India*, p. 383-4. 1946 Ed. ) Has Panditji now changed his views under pressure of secularism ?

Dr. R. C. Majumdar in his *The Sepoy Mutiny and Revolt of 1857* says, "even the contemporary writers, both

Indians and Europeans, have unanimously regarded it as a state of anarchy." In fact, Dr. Majumder refused to consider the mutiny of 1857 neither as a national awakening nor as a War of Independence.

Dr. S. N. Sen was invited by the Education Minister to write a history of the struggle of 1857 "based on facts and facts alone and avoid all appeal to passion or sentiment", and the Education Minister is "glad to find that Dr. Sen has treated the subject objectively and dispassionately" though the Maulana did not agree with most of the conclusions of Dr. Sen.

Dr. Sen asked, "was the Revolt a spontaneous outburst of Sepoy discontent or premediated revolt engineered by clever politicians? Was it a mutiny limited to the army or did it command the support of the people at large? Was it a religious war against the Christians or a racial struggle for a suprememacy between the black and the white? Were moral issues involved in this mutiny and did the combatants unconsciously fight for their respective civilisation and culture"? ( p. 398 )

Dr. Sen quoted facts, analysed tendencies and gave his conclusions—which in a word, is "No" to all the points raised by him.

Dr. Sen says, "facts do not prove the existence of pre-concerted conspiracy for an India-wide revolt. ( p. 401 ). He narrated the story of the distribution of *Chapatis* as a medium of propagation of discontent throughout the country and dismissed it as an over emphasised or a misinterpreted event. Mr. Wilson's observation that a

( Continued on 148 )

# Effects of Indian War of Independence

*By Asoka Mehta*

The Mutiny widened the chasm between Europeans and Indians, making their cultural commingling more difficult. Smiles went out of fashion, even in portraiture the proper expression for India was that of cold ferocity. The English soldiers despised Indians—even those fighting on their side. They denied the Indians a common soul, grudgingly conceding: "If the niggers have souls they are not the same as ours." Hatred is an intoxicating cup. The Mutiny produced, as W. H. Russell was quick to notice, such estrangement and ill-feeling between the two races "that perhaps confidence will never be restored." The ugly controversies about indigo, Rudd, Fuller and the Ilbert Bill—that disfigured the next thirty years confirm Russell's pessimistic prognostication. The improvised gallows were taken down, but the strangling loops of prejudice remained.

The collapse of the Mutiny, likewise, generated a miasma of misunderstanding between the Muslims and Hindus. The Muhammedans had evinced a keener and more widespread sympathy for the Rebellion. Even in South India, where their number was negligible, many conspiracies among the Muslims



were uncovered between 1857 and 1859. The accounts of British refugees are replete with such statements as follows: "As it was a Hindu Village we were not afraid to venture to it." "The Hindus all expressed the most merciful feelings towards the Feringhis, while the Muhammedans could not disguise their murderous feelings."\*1

When the rebellion began Hindus and Muslims participated in it in large numbers. It was not a rebellion of one community. But the Mussalmans, for historical and ideological reasons, were more violently anti-British than the Hindus. To many of them, inspired by the philosophy of Shah Waliulla, India under British rule was *Dar-ul-Harb* and a *jihad* against the alien ruler was not only a national necessity but a religious duty. The British, therefore, feared the fiery and excitable Muslim more than the proverbially mild Hindu.

### **The Hand of Repression**

The hand of repression fell heavily on the Muslims, they were as it were tattooed with terror. Many of their leading men such as the Nawabs of Jhajjar, Ballabgharh, Faruknagar and Farukabad were hanged or exiled. "Twenty Shahzadas were hanged at Delhi yesterday (18th November, 1857) morning. Two were brothers-in-law of the King, the remainder nephews, etc."\*2 Muslim quarters were everywhere the target.

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1. Ball, pp ii, 92, 97.

2. Sir William Muir : Indian Mutiny—N. W. P. Intelligence Records, pp i. 273.

General Neill's instructions to Major Renaud, for instance, read : "The town of Fathepur, which has revolted, is to be attacked, and the Pathan quarters to be destroyed with all their inhabitants." Muslim property was widely confiscated. After the re-occupation of Delhi, Hindus were allowed to return within a few months ; but the Muhammedan population was altogether excluded and the attachment on their houses was lifted only in 1859. In the Delhi division every Muslim was mulcted of a quarter of his real property while the fine levied on the Hindus was just ten percent.

The wrath of the rulers was mainly directed against the Muslims. "Show these rascally Mussulmans", wrote Capt. Roberts (the future Field-Marshal Lord Roberts), "that with God's help, Englishmen will still be master of India." The sufferings of the Muslims were great ; innocent and guilty alike perished in the flaming vengeance of the victors. The family of even staunch loyalist, like Syed Ahmed Khan, paid a heavy toll in hardship and death.\*3 The terror and dismay of the time are caught in the letters of Ghalib : "Shaher sahra ho gaya (The City has become a howling wilderness). Urdu-bazar is gone, what then of Urdu ? Delhi is no more a city, it is a camp—the fort, the town, the bazars, and the canals, all are gone.....The Mahajan (Hindu merchant class) remains, but of (well-to-do) Muslims only three are left.....So many comrades have been

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3. G. F. I. Graham : Syed Ahmed Khan, pp. 27-8

killed that if I die today there will be none to weep for me." The following extract conveys the insecurity of life in that period :

### **Aftereffects**

"Hakim Raziuddin was shot dead in the *qatl-am* (the general massacre in Delhi by the English army). Ahmed Husain Khan and his younger brother were also killed on the same day. Talyar Khan's two sons, who had come to Delhi on a visit, could not return to Tonk because of the gadar, they were hanged today."\*4.

The Muslims not only braved more and suffered more in the Mutiny, but they refused to accept defeat and remained unreconciled for a long time. They kept up resistance in different forms : witness their frontier wars and the far-flung conspiracies ; the centres of the two activities were Sitana and Patna respectively. They rejected English education and thereby steadily lost ground in professions and in the Government services. While the Hindus were absorbing Western ideas and adjusting themselves to the new circumstances, the Muslims remained aloof, estranged, wrapped up in their traditional beliefs. The Muslim renaissance, that had been growing in Delhi, wilted with the Mutiny. "Five years ago, the writer of this article visited Delhi," wrote the *Calcutta Review* (January-June, 1858 ), "and was perfectly surprised at the prodigious activity of the Muhammedan press in the city." The activity received an irreparable

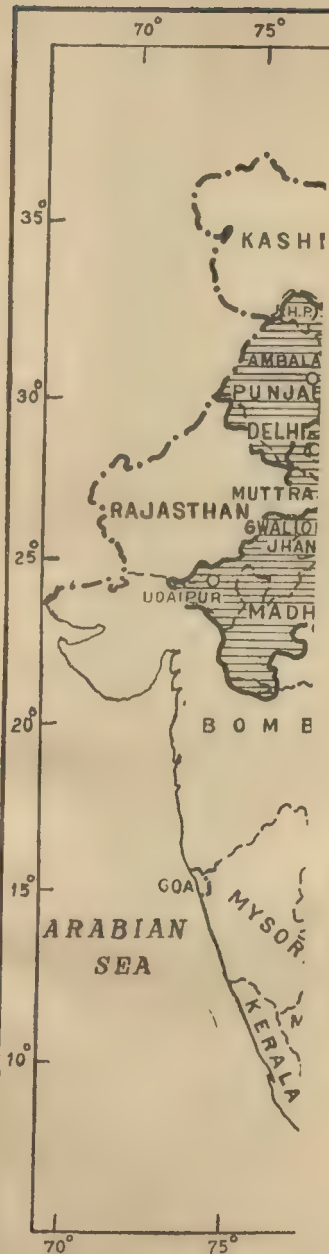
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4. Ghalib : Ood i-Hindi, passim

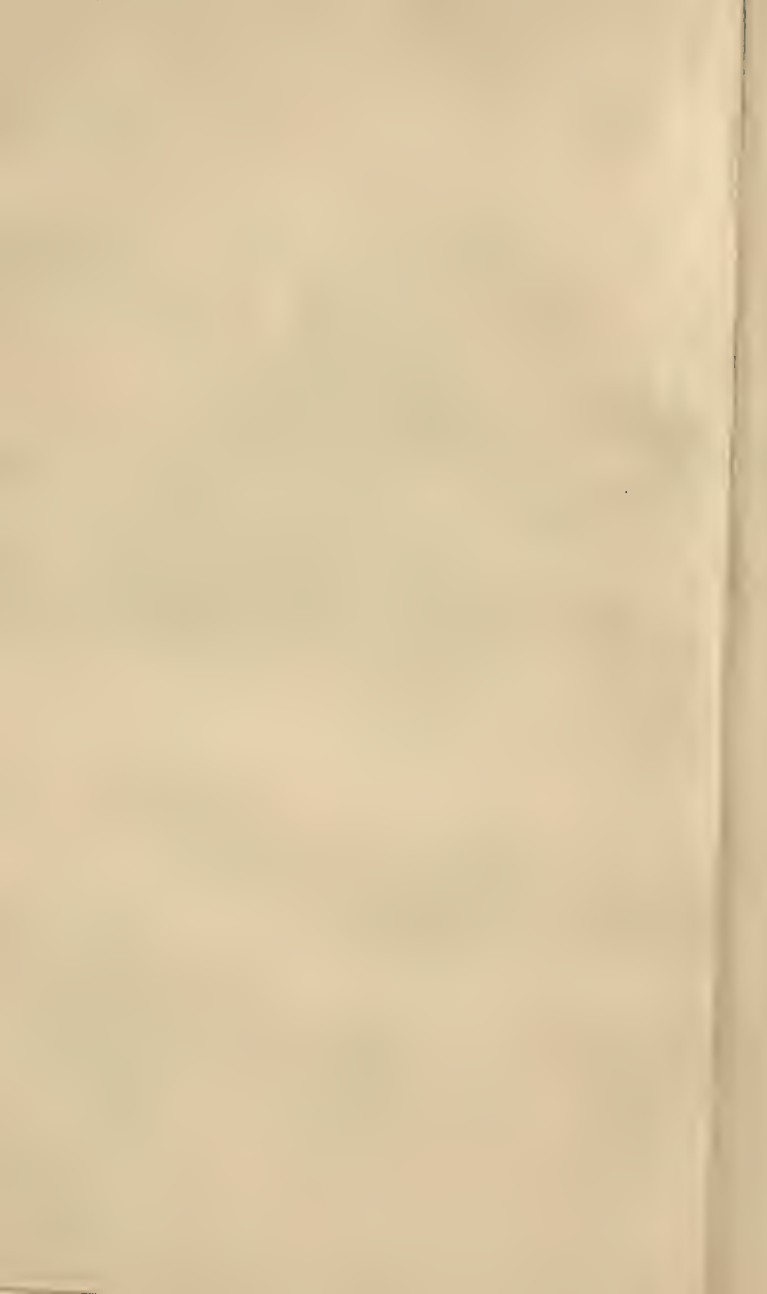
“At every large military station in the Empire there are (now) enough Europeans,” observed Sir Richard Temple, “to hold except their own, even in the event of a mutiny.” Native artillery, with the exception of batteries on the North-West frontier, was abolished. Artillery was made an integral part of the Royal Artillery of the British Service.

### **Deep-rooted Plan**

In the new Native army men of the higher casts were excluded. The association of spiritual and military leadership that a Brahmin army implied was severed. Recruitment was confined to lower caste Hindus, Gurkhas, Sikhs and trans-border Pathans. The Bengal army with the enlistment of 82,000 Punjabis, became virtually the Punjab Army. The new army was organised on the basis of division and counterpoise. Sir John Lawrence, Neville Chamberlain and Herbert Edwards had suggested (1858) that to keep the native army ‘safe’, “next to the grand counterpoise of a sufficient European force, comes the counterpoise of natives against natives”. At first sight it might be thought that the best way to secure this would be to mix up all the military races in India in each and every regiment, and make them all ‘general service corps’. But excellent as this theory seems, it does not bear the test of practice. It is found that different races mixed together do not long preserve their distinctiveness; their corners and angles, feelings and prejudices, get rubbed off, till at last they assimilate, and the object of the association to a







considerable extent lost. To preserve that distinctiveness which is so valuable, and which while it lasts, makes the Muhammedan of one country despise, fear or dislike the Muhammedan of another, corps in future should be provincial, and adhere to the geographical limits within which differences and rivalries are strongly marked. "The Peel Committee endorsed the proposals and the post-Mutiny army had as its corner-stone 'the policy of water-tight compartments.' The army as a possible fighting instrument of the people was shattered. "There is no one left in India to fight you now," a rebel sepoy had said, "for you have beaten all the people with the Sepoys, and now you beat the Sepoys themselves."

To safeguard British rule in India, mere army reorganization was not enough. It was necessary to strengthen the regime's native base. The Queen's Proclamation (1858) when stripped of its sonorous soporific verbiage, shows that a stronger base could be achieved by supporting the politically and socially reactionary elements of Indian society.

### **Attitude of Landed Aristocracy**

"After the Mutiny", wrote Sir John Strachey, "there came over the British Government and its officers almost throughout India a flood of reactionary opinions."\*6 The princes had rendered valuable service in suppressing the Mutiny and had elicited from Canning the tribute of constituting "breakwaters to the storm which would

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6. J. Strachey : India, pp 250.



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have otherwise swept over us in one great wave." "To preserve them as *the bulwark* empire has ever since been a main principle of British policy."\*7 Not the princes only, but the zamindars also were taken under British wings. The Government of India wrote to the Secretary of State (1859): "The maintenance of a landed aristocracy in India, where it exists, is an object of such importance that we may well afford to sacrifice to it something....." In pursuance of this policy, two-thirds of the Oudh Taluqdars—whom Canning had stigmatized as "men distinguished neither by birth, good service or connection with the soil", were, notwithstanding their participation in the rebellion, rehabilitated "as a necessary element in the social constitution of the Provinces"; they received back the estates under titles more favourable than even of 1856. Not merely the rehabilitation, but the extension of the zamindari settlement all over India was seriously mooted: "From 1858-62 the subject was under discussion in India and England."\*8 Financial stringency, a legacy of the Mutiny, compelled the Government to abandon the idea; solicitude for the landed aristocracy was to be shown, not by limiting the demands of the Government, but at the expense of the peasantry. In Sambalpur and other Mutiny-torn districts of the Central Province, *malguzari* system was introduced in this period. In just one division of the Punjab, out of

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7. P. E. Roberts; India, pp ii 388.

8. H. S. Cunningham: British India and his Rulers, pp 162.



46,000 agriculturists who had been recorded as occupancy tenants, more than three-fourths were reduced, with a stroke of pen, to the position of tenants-at-will, liable to ejection and rack-renting. The Taluqdars were endowed with civil and criminal jurisdiction. The Government put the feudal interests firmly in the saddle. The feudal revolt against alien rulers ended in their strengthening of the feudal class. Such are the dialectics of social change.

The alliance with political reactionaries was accompanied by a similar support to social obscurantists. Dalhousie, it is said, "changed the squares of obsolete tradition for the rounds of civilized enlightments.\*9 After the Mutiny, the effort was to preserve the squares and hinder their curling into circles. Progressive measures, like female education and the suppression of polygamy, were systematically cold-shouldered by the Government. Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who had succeeded in legalizing the re-marriage of Hindu widow (1856) failed, notwithstanding support from influential people, to get his bill to restrain polygamy among Hindus (1863) on the statute-book. "A nervous fear", wrote Sir Henry Maine, "of altering native custom has, ever since the terrible events of 1857, taken possession of Indian administrators." Officials like Lepel Griffin and James Kerr advocated fostering of the caste-spirit as it 'is opposed to national union.'

The economic significance of the Mutiny was no less far-reaching. Dr. Buchanan has rightly classed

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9. H. S. Cunningham : Earl of Canning, pp 10.

it with the Opium War and the American Civil War as an important market war. The Mutiny marked the end of territorial expansion and opened the era of economic consolidation of the British power in India. "About the time of the Mutiny", wrote Sir John Seeley, "annexation almost ceased and yet the quarter of the century in which no conquests have been made has been the period of a rapid growth in trade."\*10 Trade expanded by 360 percent. Thank, however, to India's political subjection, the effects of the expansion were nearly the reverse of those in a free country like the United States of America.

These changes threatened to stir up forces that would some day prove dangerous. With the Mutiny, Old India had shot her bolt. The danger to the Government was likely to come from the New India growing up on the intellectual pabulum coming from the West. The Government, therefore, put a term to progressive legislation; property and obscurantism became their *protéges*. The Mutiny thus marks a sea-change in the policy of the Government.

The Rebellion of 1857 was more than a mere Sepoy Mutiny, was an eruption of the social volcano wherein many pent-up forces found vent. After the eruption the whole social topography had changed. The scars of the Rebellion remain deep and shining.

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10. Seeley : Expansion of England, pp 313.

# Ranee Lakshmibai of Jhansi

By Srimati Yamuna Sheorey

[ *The authoress is a grand daughter of the late*

*Chintaman Rao Tambe, brother of the Ranee* ]

Among those who laid down their lives in the first war of Independence of 1857, the most illustrious was the Ranee of Jhansi who died actually fighting on the battle-field of Gwalior. The world has produced many women who have reflected the spark of genius or heroism in many fields, but there is no parallel to the example of the brave young Ranee Laxmibai. She was not even 28 when the flame of her life was extinguished. But the valour she showed as a soldier as well as a general in the art of warfare was unique. It was her supreme sacrifice, made in a spirit of dedication that deeply touched the core of the Indian people who kept the cinders of freedom struggle alive that brought freedom to our country within 90 years of her martyrdom.

From all data and accounts that are available, it is clear that she knew that she would not win the battle against the superior and highly mechanized army of the British General Sir Hugh Rose. She was not in command of the Revolutionary Army and she was smarting under the sense of indiscipline and weakness from which her forces suffered for want of vigorous and dynamic leadership.

Historians have opined that if at the fateful Peshwa Darbar of Kalpi, Ranee of Jhansi were appointed the Commander-in-Chief of the army instead of the lax and pleasure-loving Rao Saheb Peshwa, the course of destiny might have been different. Even Tatya Tope's extraordinary genius as a general was somewhat eclipsed by his emotional loyalty to the Peshwas. The Ranee had tremendous respect for the brave Tatya Tope and if they were given a free hand they would have made a combination that would have turned the tide of war against the British. But our cup was not yet full, and so things were otherwise.

Laxmibai was the daughter of a commoner, Moropant Tambe, a Brahmin in the employ of the Peshwas in Bithur on the bank of the Ganga, where they lived in a kind of exile after their defeat in the Maratha war. Her maiden name was Manubai. Born at Kasi in Assighat locality on October 21, 1835, she was brought up in Bithur in the company of Nana Saheb and Rao Saheb Peshwa. She learnt horse-riding, shooting and swordsmanship in her young days and was greatly interested in physical culture. Her mental and spiritual grounding was conditioned by a study of *Gita*, *Ramayana* and *Bhagwat* which were taught to her by her parents.

It was just a coincidence that she became the wife of Raja Gangadhar Rao of Jhansi, who was older to her in age by several years. His first wife was dead and he was in search of a second. Manubai was only 8 when the intermediary fixed up the marriage and got it performed in accordance with the practice of those

times. Manubai was renamed as Laxmibai after her marriage and she came to Jhansi as a queen.

Raja Gangadhar Rao claimed friendship with the British which was not much liked by the Rancee. She bore him a son who died very shortly. The shock proved too much for the Raja who fell ill and seeing that the end was near, he adopted a young boy Damodar Rao as his son to continue the family line.

But Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor-General and the author of the well-known "Doctrine of Lapse", refused to approve of the adoption and ordered the territory of Jhansi to be annexed to the British Raj by granting a pension of Rs 5,000 per month to the widow. The Rancee felt deeply hurt and humiliated and shouted spiritedly in the very Darbar in which the order was communicated to her that she would not surrender her Jhansi to the British. That was the beginning of the tension.

But the Rancee did not precipitate the crisis. She was tactful and diplomatic. On the one hand she sent her representative to England to plead her case and on the other she started training her womenfolk in horse-riding and military warfare. Her preparations began, and she was waiting for an opportunity.

The opportunity came after the soldiers uprising in Meerut on May 10, 1857 and their storming Delhi and declaring Bahadur Shah as the Emperor of India. These events were followed by uprisings in Banaras, Allahabad, Lucknow and Kanpur also. In Jhansi army sepoys killed British officers. The Rancee informed the commi-



ssioner of Jabalpur that in the absence of any ruling authority she was taking over the reins of administration to prevent lawlessness and disorder. At that time the British had no option but to consent. The Ranee thus became a full-fledged ruler of Jhansi.

She held court and dispensed justice. She gave quick decisions in civil and criminal cases. She trained up men and women in physical culture and militarism. She personally visited the sick and comforted them. She was tall, fair and handsome and an impressive personality. The citizens felt that the veritable Goddess Laxmi, the Goddess of Wealth and Plenty, had come to reign over them.

Now that a woman was ruling Jhansi, Sadashivrao Nealkar, a claimant to the throne invaded the territory. The Ranee led her own forces in the battle and inflicted a crushing defeat on him.

In the initial stages of the Revolt, British forces were pushed out from most of the Bundelkhand territory and the area between the Vindhya and the Yamuna. Smarting under this defeat, they drew up a detailed plan to win back the territory. General Sir Hugh Rose was put in charge of the campaign. After the fall of Delhi in September 1875, and of Kanpur in December 1875 and of Lucknow on March 3, 1858, the Britishers turned their attention towards Jhansi to eliminate the central pocket. General Rose laid his siege of Jhansi on March 23, 1858. The battle became grim from the 25th March. The British General was stunned when he saw through his binoculars that women loaded and fired the cannons

from Jhansi. The Ranee's gunman Mohammad Ghaus Khan rained hell fire on the British cannons most of which were silenced. The Ranee personally visited the ramparts of the Fort and kept up the morale of her army. But from March 31 onwards, her resistance weakened. Tatya Tope came from Kalpi to help, but the indisciplined army of the Peshwas did not give any stand and ran away leaving guns and ammunition. That was an opportunity for General Rose who redoubled his attack. Jhansi fell before his ruthless bombardment. The Ranee wept bitterly to see her dear city burning in flames. She even felt like perishing with the city. But she was advised by her father and other Sardars to save her life, and continue to give a fight from other battle-fields. Jhansi would rise again, they said, if the Ranee lived.

This advice ultimately prevailed and she rode on horseback along with a handful of her trusted lieutenants and maids in the dead of night and broke through the enemy cordon. Her adopted son Damodar was tied to her back. She wore man's apparel and therefore it took some hours for the enemy to realise that the Ranee had fled unscathed. But when they knew of this, Lt. Boker was sent to pursue her with a small contingent. The Ranee turned back on him like a lioness and so wounded him by her sword that he fell from the horse.

The Ranee thus reached safely to Kalpi, a distance of 102 miles riding on the horse all through the night. There she met Rao Saheb Peshwa and General Tatya Tope. From here the revolutionary forces gave battle

to the British troops in Kuchgaon and at Kalpi but suffered reverses. The British captured Kalpi but they could not lay their hands on any of the important leaders of the revolutionaries.

What next was the question mark? Peshwa Sardars advised a withdrawal towards Rajasthan or even a return to Maharashtra. But the Ranee emphatically asserted that we cannot give successful battle to the enemy unless we capture a strong force. So let us march on Gwalior. "Gwalior?"—the people asked incredulously!

And so they marched towards Gwalior. Scindia came with his forces to resist. But the Ranee pounced on him with a rare dash. Jayaji Scindia got terrified and fled towards Agra to take shelter in the British camp. The revolutionary forces captured the Fort of Gwalior and planted their flag on it.

The conquest unnerved the British forces. In spite of continuous defeats, they thought, it was the Ranee of Jhansi alone who could be capable of such daring. Unless she was liquidated, there would be no peace in this part of the country, they concluded. And so they set themselves to the task in right earnest. General Sir Hugh Rose, who was going on leave to England was recalled from Bombay and was put in charge of the expedition.

Ranee Laxmibai also warned her colleagues to prepare themselves to give the final battle, because she knew the British forces would not rest till they had avenged. But Rao Saheb Peshwa and his people had become complacent.

Ranee Laxmibai was in great anguish. But since she

was not in charge of the command, she could do nothing much to save the situation. She was however determined to go all out in the fray so far as she and her forces were concerned.

On June 17, 1858, the battle of Gwalior began. General Rose was a tactician and he put Jayaji Scindia in front to lead the British forces. The Gwalior army which had joined the revolutionaries was non-plussed. How to fight against their own ruler, they asked? But in spite of this confusion, the Revolutionary forces put up a strong defence and the British army could not cut much ice on the first day.

June 18, 1858 dawned. It was a hot day and the Ranee took a cup of lemon juice. She had already donned her red-soldier's attire. And so did her men and women soldiers. And the bombardment from the British cannons began. The Ranee immediately mounted her steed and plunged into the battlefield. The British Generals were aghast at her daring.

Suddenly, the bayonet of a white soldier pierced the lower side of her chest and blood gushed out from her body. She turned round like a wounded lioness and finished the attacker. She saw her dear maid and friend Mundar falling dead by the bullet of another soldier. She struck him by the sword with full force and cut him into two. Another soldier's bullet hit the Ranee in the left thigh. She dropped the sword from her left hand to press the wound and with her right hand she hit the assailant who collapsed on the spot. Now only three or four soldiers remained around her. One of

them struck the Ranee on the head with his sword. The right side of her head was cut and her right eye bulged out bleeding. Still she hit back the soldier and cut out his shoulder. Her faithful Pathan Sardar Gul Mohammed pounced on the soldier and cut him into pieces and then he turned towards the remaining soldiers with the same murderous intent who then fled away for safety.

Her followers carried her bleeding to the hut of Baba Gangadas. The Sadhu recognised her and put the holy Ganga water in her mouth. She was heard to mutter "Har Har Mahadeo" and became unconscious. After a while she regained consciousness and whispered "Om Namō Bhagwate Vasudevaya" between her pale lips and passed away into the eternal sleep.

The Sadhu consoled the bitterly weeping Sardars. A funeral pyre was hurriedly made up of dry grass. Dust went unto dust. Her wish that the body should not fall into the British hands was fulfilled.

On the spot where she was cremated, in Gwalior, a modest monument has been raised where thousands of the illustrious Ranee's countrymen and women go to pay their tearful homage. Nearly ninety years after her sacrifice, did her dream come true and India became free. May we all be worthy of her and of all the galaxy of martyrs who have laid down their lives so heroically for the freedom of our motherland.

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# Shahzada Firoz Shah

*By* Dr. Surendra Nath Sen

Shahzada Firoz Shah's is almost a forgotten name today. Of him or his ancestry nothing was known to the authorities when during the turbulent days of the revolt of 1857 he had set himself the task of driving the English out of Central India. They took him for Bahadur Shah's son. After elaborate investigations at Delhi it was learnt that there were at least seven Firozes in the Imperial Household, and that the one who was leading the rebel forces in Central India at the time was the son of Nizam-e-Bakht.

It is not known on what date of which year Shahzada Firoz Shah was born, but he was about 25 years old in 1857. The fall of the Imperial House of Delhi was then total and complete. The valour and heroism of their forebears was something they dreamed of. Shah Jahan's strong arm they did not have, but Shah Jahan's fondness for luxury and pleasure possessed them still. Their one desire was for wine and women. Yet the Imperial Household was in no way affluent. The costly furniture of Shah Jahan's palaces was draped in dirty, ugly rags. The members of the royal family made no attempt to make things better. The pittance they received as pension would not support even a family of moderate means. And yet the profligate princes would not do a



thing to better their lot. They dreaded moving out and lived in constant anxiety lest they should have to.

Firoz Shah was cast in a different mould. The Red Fort with its lofty walls held no charm for him. He found its world too narrow and circumscribed. He had heard the call of the great world beyond, and had been to Arabia before the outbreak of mutiny. He landed at Bombay when the conflagration had started. History is silent as to how he later made his way to Sitamau. The Rajput Prince of Sitamau is reputed with having, at one time, given some financial help to Shah Jahan. Next we find him at Andashor, not far from Sitamau. Andashor is not altogether unknown in Indian history. It is here that the panegyric on Yasodharma, the vanquisher of the Sakas, was found. In the year 1657 an officer of the Scindia was the Governor of Andashor. Scarcely had Firoz Shah made preparations for an uprising there before the Scindia's men threw him out of the city. The shiftless Shahzada took refuge in a deserted mosque. Slowly and silently the disaffected populace of Central India rallied round him and accepted his leadership. By and by the number of his followers grew and soon under his flag were gathered the Pathan and Thakrani troopers of the area. Then he took Andashor without much trouble and besieged Acmuch, and firmans went out to the petty chiefs of Central India calling upon them to send him troops, supplies and revenue. But the vassal princes dared not accept the suzerainty of the rebel Shahzada. However, Firoz Shah did not stay long in Central India. News came that the

rebel sepoys of Indore, on their march to Agra, had reached Gwalior, and he left for Dholpur. In his absence his troops were defeated by Sir Henry Durand. The Indore sepoys, too, were worsted on the outskirts of Agra by Colonel Greathead. But Feroz Shah remained undaunted. To try his strength with the English he first went to Oudh and later entered Rohilkhand.

When General Sir Colin Campbell was engaged in deploying his men to get hold of the discomfited rebel leaders, Nana Sahib, the Begum of Oudh the Prince of Gonda, Vir Bai Madhaye of Sankarpur and the others crossed the border into Nepal. But Feroz Shah did not follow them. Instead of escaping to the North, he broke through the enemy lines, arrived back in Central India, joined hands with Tantia Topi and made it hot for the British Generals in that part of the country. To him it was a righteous war, and he firmly believed that the English would have the worst of it in the long run. Victory was being delayed, he thought, because of the sinful killing of innocent women and children in violation of the leaders' directions to the contrary.

Once he made an attempt to come to terms with the victorious English but it did not succeed, for he would not agree either to the proposal of disarming his followers or to that of passing the rest of his life as a State prisoner at some officially chosen spot. When all hopes of success vanished Feroz Shah fled from the country, and, as long as he lived, he was steadfast in his resolve, to return and fight it out.

Colourful as well as pathetic were the last days of

Firoz Shah. The indigent prince would one day be roaming through central Asia taking Bokhara, Samarkand and other cities in his stride ; another day he would be seen at the very gates of India, from where he would betake himself to Iran by way of Kabul. But wherever he might be he could never elude the eagle eye of the British secret service. At last Firoz Shah went to the Turkish capital, Constantinople, and there in 1872, the British Ambassador located him. At that time Constantinople was a centre of activities of the anti-British group of Indian Muslims ; but their leader was Sultan Ibrahim of Hyderabad. A spy in the pay of captain Hunter saw Firoz Shah in July of 1875. Want and privation and the rigour of his long treks had by then broken his health completely. Crippled and with one eye sightless, he reached Mecca and there in the holy city he died the death of a devout Muslim in 1877. In his last days he eked out a living from what he received as alms from Indian pilgrims and the Mecca Sharif.

For two years he had fought the English with indomitable spirit. He had never stained his hands by shedding innocent blood. To the last he strove for his country's freedom. Never did he abandon the struggle, and it was this that had made him old before his years. Unsuccessful though his strivings were, to him today we offer our respectful homage. Firoz could not, like Babur, set up a new kingdom but, after three hundred years, he relived the greatness that was Babur's.

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# Random Thought On 1857 War

*By Kamalapati Tripathi,  
Minister for Home, Education  
& Information, U. P.*

The tree of freedom, they say, is nursed by the blood of martyrs. The concept of nationhood likewise is nursed and strengthened by a conscious inculcation of reverence for those martyrs. Study of the history of the freedom struggle of a nation, celebration of anniversaries of freedom battles and birth-days and dates of martyrdom of heroes are some of the ways that have served an important purpose in bringing about the emotional integration from which the concept of nationhood derives its perennial sustenance. In this history of India the mutiny of 1857 happens to be the first major expression of the common national urge. Irrespective of the differences in religion, caste, language, province or station in life Indians as a whole yoked themselves to an effort at relieving the land from British domination. While the rulers of Delhi and the Maratha princes were mostly at war between themselves they took no time in joining hands against the British. Bahadur Shah led the revolt in the north and Nana Farnavis in the south. Nana Sahib Dhundhu Pant and Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi

themselves accepted Bahadur Shah as their Sovereign. All the differences were consciously sunk in a common endeavour against a common enemy. 1857, thus, marks the beginning of India's nationhood.

More than once in the history of India the entire stretch of land from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari and the Khaiber to the hills of Arakan has come under a single flag. People all over have paid homage to the monarch of Delhi or Pataliputra. In the event of attacks also they have sent armies in support. The consciousness of nationhood nevertheless was rarely, if ever, in evidence. At least it did not come to acquire the emotional and intellectual grip over the people necessary for giving an idea—the connotation of a material force. The Hindu rulers of Delhi repeatedly performed the Ashvamedha Yagna. Rulers of the Pataliputra did the same. During Muslim period, too, there were campaigns of conquest and the writ of Delhi ran more than once from end to end. It was, however, an integrity imposed from above and the feeling of oneness that rises from below welding the entire populace in a union of outlook and response was almost missing. The advent of a common enslaver in the British helped generate that feeling.

Scholars of history have engaged in learned disputation about the patriotic nature or otherwise of the 1857 mutiny. But, as the philosophers hold, scholarship is not always an affirmation of the truth. It is more than not the indulgence of the scholars with their favourite ideas. The dispute about the 1857 mutiny has also degenerated into a specimen of intellectual jugglery.

Whatever the historians might have to say, for an average Indian the very mention of the mutiny of 1857 will continue to throw up a nostalgia akin to the best known struggles of national independence all over the world, the Italian and Hungarian struggle against the Hapsburgs, the Irish struggle against the British, and, last but not the least, the American war of Independence. That the effort was more revivalist than progressive in nature does not deprive it of its national character. On the contrary in so far as it made for unity among the Hindus and Muslims it was most certainly a progressive movement. As a matter of fact the very emergence of the idea of nationhood on such an effective scale was a progressive phenomenon for India.

Enough has been said on the obscurantist notions that obtain in certain sections of our people about the 57th years of the Gregorian calendar. References are made in fashionable society to the bloodshed which fell to the lot of 1657, 1757 and the 1857 and it is attempted to deduce that the 1957 also has similar bloody upheavals in store. Apart from our ignorant and superstitious rural masses the former feudal elements seem to be tacitly encouraging this notion. Beyond our frontiers too it has been exploited by such men as the former Khaksar leader, Allama Mashriqi. They even speak of predictions made in some of their holy books about 1957 seeing the end of the freedom of India. It cannot be brushed aside as mere fantasy and hallucination of the ruling party that this unfortunate notion is being worked upon systematically, though without much effect yet, by those



who do not see eye to eye with the forces in power.

May 10 is the centenary of our first effort to drive out the British from India. That aim has been achieved. It is, thus, an occasion for rejoicing. To say that this anniversary should be made an occasion of reminding people of that which still lies unaccomplished is to belittle the significance of the effort which the occasion is to mark. This attitude shifts the emphasis from the importance of what has been achieved to that which still remains to be achieved. The occasion, thus, becomes one of pledging oneself to a future course of action rather than one of celebrating the success of old efforts. This insistence on the future reduces the ceremony to a mere memorial service and reflects the morbidity of a dependent nation projected beyond the period of servitude.

We achieved our independence with perhaps the least of sacrifice ever made by any nation for a similar cause in human history. That is also why the importance of freedom is not much realized amongst our people. In the generation which came to age after the achievement of freedom this realization is still less. The anniversary of 1857, let us hope, will focus attention of our youth on the magnitude of sacrifice and effort which had to be undergone in the fight against an empire like the British. Might be this will lead them to put necessary store by freedom and prevent them from lending themselves to ideas and deeds which, if not damage that freedom, do stand in the way of its being

strengthened adequately for survival in a world like to-day's.

As I said above the stories of heroes and martyrs form the cement of the edifice of national feeling. There ought to be, I feel, some sort of a compulsory curriculum in our schools for education in nationalism. The story of the 1857 mutiny can well form the first chapter of that curriculum.

The contribution of Uttar Pradesh to the 1857 struggle has been particularly significant. The mutiny had its birth in Meerut and a number of places where important battles of this war were fought, happen to be in our eastern districts. The entire area of Bundelkhand and the neighbouring districts of Kanpur, Farrukhabad and Etawah and the Rohelkhand and Mathura also played important parts. The story of Avadh is too wellknown to repeat it here. The entire State, as it were, had risen in revolt. Nana-Dhundhu Pant, Rani Laxmi Bai, Kunwar Singh, Dewan Azimullah and Mangal Pandey, who fired the first shot on March 29, 1857, at Barrackpore, all belonged to Uttar Pradesh or near about. We have, therefore, a special duty towards the celebrations. Let us hope the sons and daughters of the soil which has been anointed with the blood of these martyrs will not fail to give them the reverence they deserve. While deriving from their lives the inspiration for future struggles, let not their anniversaries be dragged into any controversy which might detract from their solemnity.

Let us be clear in our minds about the nature of

our freedom. Much of the confusion among people about the doings of the Congress arises perhaps from the lack of this knowledge. More than once the Congress has made it clear through its election manifestoes and policy resolutions that it is committed to nothing else but democracy and democratic socialism. Democracy, as is well-known, is not essentially of idealistic origin. Instead it has its being in the philosophy of humanism and has travelled a purely utilitarian path. The famous dictum of John Stuart Mill—the greatest good of the greatest number—still forms the corner-stone of the democratic process. The rule of majority is still synonymous with the rule of the people. It is nevertheless the ultimate good of all that is behind all progressive social philosophies—democratic or otherwise. Through an empirical process the base of democratic freedom has continued to widen and it should not be difficult for one to visualize the day when it would be co-existent with the entire humanity.

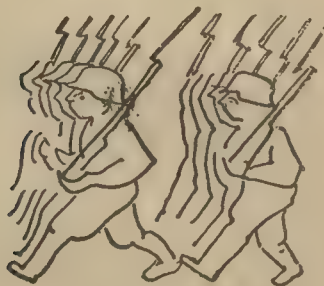
India has her own problems—many of them entirely different from those obtaining in the countries of the West. The vast geographical dimensions while making it a potential formidable power also expose it to the danger of looseness in administrative control. Its people profess a number of faiths, belong to different races and are graded in social and religious hierarchy of infinite variety. All this stands in the way of that cohesion and homogeneity which characterise countries like Britain, France, Germany or even America and Russia. The economic conditions also reflect in all

their living impact the various stages of our development, right from the primitive to the most modern. Ours is, therefore, a task of not only moving to socialism but of bringing the entire country to a social and economic position from where the jump to socialism will not mean the dismemberment of the nation. It is quite likely that in our hurry for socialism we may leave behind numerous sections which in their ignorance and inertia do not appreciate the promise of socialism. A national leadership cannot be expected to take this risk. For a truly national leadership though the greatest good of the greatest number is of practical concern, the interests of those left out have also got to be zealously protected.

All these moral and practical preoccupations notwithstanding we have performed during the last ten years of our freedom a feat of consolidation and progress which any country can reasonably pride itself with. The improvements in the material and cultural conditions affected since achievement of freedom should be a source of inspiration to our people and fortify their faith in their leadership. It is a regular revolution, in all the extent and depth of its impact, that India is passing through today. The many giant dams and reservoirs are quenching in their bounty the primitive thirst of our land while huge power projects and industrial plants are steadily reliving it of the want of clothing and other consumer goods. Compared to countries which adopted the path of violence and bloodshed ours has been an achievement of no mean order. Our only failing ( or strength ? ) has been our insistence on the peaceful path

and that is why our achievements, despite all their magnitude, have failed to create the impression which the Russian or the Chinese revolutions did. Not only have our achievements failed to excite interest outside but even in our own land their significance is not realized in full measure. The path of peace has its price and we Congressmen imbued with spirit of Sarvodaya and Ahimsa are ever willing to pay it.

The process of struggle, started 100 years ago by the heroes of the mutiny, has continued uninterrupted. From political freedom we are steadily moving to social and economic emancipation. Let us pray the souls of martyrs now in heaven will continue to shower benediction on this land and the spirit of liberty, fraternity and equality continue to inspire her people for ever and ever more.



# A Salute To 1857

*By Bhupati Mazumder,  
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A little thought will show that nothing unexpected happens in this world. The human organism is a continuity whose lifeblood connects eternity to eternity. Man's society, his way of life, his intelligence, his memory—all are part of a continuing process of development. His action of today is perhaps the culmination of some endeavour whose fountain of inspiration may be shrouded in the misty past stretching across many centuries. The flame of liberty that burst into the conflagration of 1857 was perhaps ignited a hundred years ago under the impact of the self-immolation of Mir Madan and Mohan Lal at the battlefield of Palassey on the day when the English traders contrived by foul and unscrupulous means, the destruction of the Nawab and his power and laid the foundation of an empire. In the Sannyassin Rebellion of 1770-1771 we see the germs of that flame, of that desire for freedom, which arose after the rude awakening at Palassey.

We have not authentic history of all that happened during those days, but on the basis of what little had come to light was written Bankim's 'Ananda Math'. The enforcement of an utterly new set of laws and morals had, even in that age of decline and decadence, roused people to exasperation. Thus it was that the



Sannyassins banded themselves together to deal out stern justice to the wrongdoers. But the prevailing conditions were not propitious and they themselves were worted in the attempt. However, the flame did not die out altogether. It continued to flicker across the horizon of Bengal. The people, even as they lay prostrate, gathered new strength as the days passed. On the other hand the upper classes had no time to spare for the country or society. They were much too steeped in their petty quarrels and jealousies, and greed ungovernable stalked the land. Lulled and lured by the wiles and tricks of the foreigner, courage, heroism, patriotism—all lay dormant. Almost a hundred years rolled away before dying society showed signs of life again. There were preparations again on all sides for regaining lost freedom. The imperialist rules only as long as he can buy up the people of the occupied territory with money extracted from them and use them against the interest of their own country. Thus it was that oppression of Indian people by Indian soldiers and Indian police maintained with India's money, had almost come to be an established fact. At that time, during those days of degeneration a handful of brave men prepared themselves for a hard knock with the alien rulers. But again the circumstances proved unfavourable. Maharastra, the Punjab, the Deccan and the Aryavarata of Bengal, Bihar and Oudh had yet to develop the necessary contact and understanding. Indian troops, who were the right hand of the alien power, could not join up in all the

provinces. That was how the blow for freedom failed that day, and thousands of patriotic warriors and helpless men and women in the countryside had to embrace death, whether they wished it or not. Unspeakable deeds of atrocity were perpetrated by the English all over the length and breadth of the country. Hundreds of towns and villages were sacked and plundered. Retribution gone amuck, spread rapine, murder and arson throughout the countryside.

Pandey fired the first shot at Barrackpore, killing an English officer. At Jagdishpur, in the District of Arrah, Kunwar Singh and his brother joined up and helped spread the sparks of the conflagration. The Rani of Jhansi and Nana Saheb gave battle to the English at many places. Some of the leading personalities of the uprising who escaped being killed scattered themselves in different directions and went underground. The horrors perpetrated by the English threw the whole country into panic, and meanwhile they further consolidated their position and more firmly re-established their authority and power. Today, one hundred years after, we recall that memorable day. Today the English have been forced to quit this land, though it must be said that today's divided India bears no semblance to the picture of the free India which the martyrs of those days dreamed. Yet the leaders and workers of today are not dismayed. They have bravely shouldered the great responsibility and are dutifully endeavouring to carry out the task of making India strong and powerful.

In the context of today we recall the unnumbered deathdefying heroes of those days, who must remain nameless for ever. Today we revive, and spread abroad, the memories of the brave deeds of the leaders of those days. We see again the picture of a bright tomorrow for our problem-ridden Motherland. Once again down the tired blood of a nation long fallen courses new vigour and energy. We see the upsurge of a new spirit. In the background of days yet to be a great nation is rising again. We see but a little of it ; most of it escapes notice. Our salutations to the great nation of tomorrow—great in knowledge and virtue and achievements—on this day of remembrance. May India's victorious march take her a position of greater glory that that of her glorious past.



# 1857

## Fact And Fiction

By Dr. R. N. Nagar, M.A., Ph. D.,  
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The cycle of a hundred years turned full circle on the memorable day of May 10, 1957, when the nation celebrated the first centenary of the historic revolt of 1857, which laid the foundation of our struggle for freedom against British imperialism. The centenary, occurring in the wake of the achievement of national independence, has acquired a greater significance. It has aroused considerable popular enthusiasm and has focussed the attention of academicians on the implications of the turn of events which took place a hundred years ago.

Already a vigorous controversy is raging between two sections of opinions, who hold contrary views. One section avers that the epochal event of 1857 was a full-fledged war of independence—a conscious, concerted, wide-spread national movement organised to free India from the foreign yoke. The other section vehemently denies any element of conscious nationalism involved in the effort, and calls it a sepoy-mutiny staged on a small scale. Among superstitious people there is also an under-current of restless speculation that the year

will bring in its train some great upheaval in the country as had been the feature of fifty-seventh years of the past two centuries. This fantastically illogical conception has dangerous propensities if it is allowed to grow.

No right-minded Indian would decry popular discussions or even a controversy on the subject, for a mere emotional attachment to our past can do us little good, unless it is accompanied with a sober, mature and rational reassessment of the values involved. In fact, it should always be so. The binoculars of history always rectify the vision and readjust our sense of values. Without them, our perspective is marred. Just as ill-digested food harms the stomach and undermines health, half-baked notions of history only warp human judgment and pervert human behaviour. Historical interpretations and conclusions may vary one historian to another, but so long as they are impelled by disinterested motives, such differences of opinion are always welcome. However, the moment history is harnessed to any specific theory, it not only steps down from its pedestal, but also, if objectively, is in the hands of unthinking or unscrupulous people, it may become a dangerous tool. It is unfortunately true that even amongst educated Indians many mistaken notions prevail and the gullibility of a layman is very much more pronounced. He continues to dwell within the ring-fence of prejudice and superstition.

We do not propose to enter into the controversy whether the great revolt of 1857 was a conscious, national struggle for freedom, or a mere mutiny of

few Indian regiments. But some conclusions are incontrovertible. Thus it may be safely inferred that the two views represent the two extremes of the event, that the rebellious regiments certainly formed the main spearhead of the revolt and that it was characterised by a much loftier sentiment than the mere promotion of selfish interests or a burning desire for revenge. In any case, this was the first war waged against the British in India, not by an individual, or one distinct party, as had happened many times before, but was the result of a concerted move, however imperfectly organised. It was motivated by the single object of driving out the British.

Never was so much accord forthcoming before, between Hindus and Muslims, at all levels for the furtherance of one common object. This certainly was the seed of the future growth of nationalism. If the imperial rulers like Akbar and Shershah can, on the considered verdict of historians, be hailed as national rulers, then measured by the same yard-stick, the great revolt of 1857 can surely be called a national upsurge. Further, if great Indian leaders like Tilak or Subhas Bose found in the career of Shivaji the source of their inspiraton, there is an even greater justification that the epoch-making event of 1857 should form the fountain-source of the national aspirations of India in her hour of struggle against foreign domination. There are not many periods in the history of an enslaved nation which reflect indomitable courage, and a sense of dedication which was displayed by Tantia, Kunwar



Singh, Azimullah, Maulavi Ahmad Din, Laxmi Bai and Begum Hazrat Mahal, and hundreds of nameless warriors, who, in our eyes, rightly wear the halo of a martyr. Therefore, it is in the fitness of things that India celebrates the centenary of the historic event which began our struggle of liberation from foreign rule.

Alongside this popular enthusiasm runs a vague, uneasy and superstitious apprehension, that this year of 1957 bears some unpredictable catastrophe in its womb. And the most amazing part of this belief is that our history is dragged to bear witness to the correctness of this assumption. It is a complete historical fallacy, which can be easily disproved.

Let us, for a trial, turn the pages of history, and travel a hundred years before the year 1857. We arrive at a period when the Battle of Plassey had already become an accomplished fact. It was the softest of important battles fought in Indian history. Whatever indirect important implications historians may attribute to it a century or two after the event had happened, it did not bring any countrywide havoc in its trail. In fact people at the time hardly noticed the event. Also, it did not usher in the British Raj for they had already acquired a political toe-hold in India. And the victory at Plassey was but another step in the consolidation of British power in India. It was neither the beginning nor the end in itself, but it was a link in a process that had already come into a swing.

Let us travel another hundred years more, we come to the year 1657. It was marked by the war of succession

waged between the four sons of Emperor Shahjehan. It rocked India from one end to the other. But it was at best or worst a domestic feud of a ruling dynasty. The bloodshed which followed was the result, not an object. Moreover, this was a process common to Muslim dynasties and occurred much too frequently in Medieval India.

Let us go yet another hundred years further, to the year 1557. Nothing noteworthy happened in that year. The Battle of Panipat was won a year before by Bairam Khan for Akbar. It did not throw India into greater convulsion than what she had been experiencing before. On the contrary, the aftermath of this battle forms one of the most glorious chapters of Indian history, nay, of world history.

What about 1457? Nothing of note. And of the years 1357, 1257 and 1157? Nothing again, nothing at least which might have thrown the country out of gear on distinctly separate and specific counts. Thus, the voice of history can at best, be a hostile witness to the assertion that the cycles of hundred years pertaining to the figure of 57 were followed by evils in their wake. Is not then this assumption a product of either a diseased imagination or a treacherous mind?

It cannot be based on the anti-social process (some call it a science) of astrology. The reason is very simple. Else astrology would have been proved false beyond dispute, for it would not have conformed to facts.

And then, what event can be of greater importance to us than what happened ten years before, when the

shackles of our bondage were broken, and we breathed the air of freedom? Whatever our internal differences may be regarding our policies and programme—all democratic nations have them, without which there cannot be any progress—we have, in the meanwhile covered many milestones of achievements. Today we march with a common stride towards a common object. Thus, left to ourselves the path of our future is bright and wide.

It is, therefore a baseless rumour, rooted in superstition, and does not merit the least attention, under any circumstances. But this baseless belief is fraught with dangerous consequences in the context of international tension which has been brought to our very doors. The reason, as to why it should be so, is that an average Indian, particularly from a village, is an irrational being where belief in supernatural is concerned, and will be ready to believe whatever that bears this colour. If deliberately planned as an organised whispering campaign, this canard may result in driving a wedge into our national solidarity. No individual should ever surrender his right of judgment, and no nation can ever afford to do so. At the present moment we face an international crisis which may burst into a mighty conflagration which no human hands can extinguish. We cannot, at the moment, afford to have our ranks divided. Any Indian who indulges in this unpatriotic form of exploitation, or allows it to go uncombated, whether the agency is indigenous or foreign ( which is more probable ) hits his own people below the belt. He commits an unpardonable crime in the eyes of the Nation and an unforgivable sin in the eyes of God.

# The Cost and Consequence of 1857

By S. S. Apte,

*Managing Director, Hindusthan Samachar (P) Ltd.*

We, in India, have always been in two minds whenever we do or think of anything. It is the character of a thinking people—a philosophical nation as we have always been. It has been so with us right from the days of the first memories or their records down to yesterday. The first question that arose in the inquisitive Aryan mind was “Sad asit-asad Asit”. What was then before the manifestation of this universe? In other words, of what all this universe is created? Is it an effect or a cause? Had this a beginning? Is it going to have an end also? The sages went on enquiring, meditating and answering. Some of this view, and others of the opposite, all divided, seldom a unity of thoughts. We pride in calling this a freedom of thought. Freedom, it is, and you may be proud of it. But it does not lead to a concentrated action.

While I am thinking of the ‘1857’, the above thought disturbed my mind. Wise men of today while giving out the causes of failure of that uprising have been criticising lack of unity, differences of views, rivalry of the leaders etc. as the main causes that led to

the defeat. Heroes of 1857 fought against a foreign power and lost, no doubt, for the above reasons. But where is the unity amongst us also today who condemn and censure our forefathers for their disunion? Whether it was a mutiny, a revolution or a War of Independence; whether it was people's uprising or a feudal outburst; the fact stands, that it was a very threatening challenge to the British power in India. We today are not agreed on the nature and the character of this 1857 struggle. We are divided in our views of this one accomplished fact. Historians and politicians the more, are opposing and abusing each other for their views about this struggle. To say more expressly the political party which is in power and which claims to have won the Independence by non-violent means does not want to even admire the national struggle for Indian freedom a hundred years back. The reason is that struggle was not of the pattern of non-violent and peaceful ideal of the present rulers. And because of this difference, whereas all the sections of the population including all the political parties in opposition celebrated the 1st Centenary day of the beginning of '57 revolution on 10th of May, the ruling party and its Government dissociated with the public. The Congress and its Government have decided to hold the celebrations on 15th of August. Well, simple logic requires that if it is to be called a centenary celebration it must be held on the day on which the revolution started. 15th of August will not be the centenary day of the revolution. It is something else. So we can

see how we are divided by different motives and view points even to-day, so much so that we cannot agree upon one single day of centenary celebration. What use or sense is there in condemning the Heroes of '57 who differed or disagreed ?

While others are weighing the evidence on the question of the nature of this revolution, I like to pose another question which has not been discussed. That question is, what is the price which we had to pay for this revolution ? If the fight for freedom started on 10th May 1857 and concluded on 15th of August 1947, what was the cost we had to bear for this 90 years' crusade for freedom ? Or in other words, what are the legacies, cursed or blessed, that we have inherited as a result of our failure in 1857 ? I wish this question should be thoroughly studied so that we can learn how to recompense ourselves for what we have lost in the 90 years.

The 1857 struggle was a revolution. What was the object, the motive and the end, of this country-wide outburst. A revolt, revolution or a rebellion presupposes discontent and an endeavour to change the order of things, the existing conditions—whether in the social structure, in the administrative set up, in the religious field, or in the philosophy of life by the classes or the masses. It is they, who rise to change the detested stagnant conditions. If the endeavour is peaceful and by constitutional means it is called reformation. But if it is by all means without



any prescription or prohibition, with the end only in view to justify the means, then it is a revolution. For the objects and aims of the revolution you must consider, amongst other things, the declarations of the leaders of revolution. We have, therefore, to find out what the leaders wanted, to understand exactly why they fought ; for that will only determine the price of revolution.

In the century before revolution of '57, there had been three other great national revolutions : Americans had a War of Independence with definite objects of freedom and rights of man. The declaration of the rights is indeed a precious charter for which the Americans fought. In France also there was a revolution. The French people were discontented with their monarchs. They wanted equality, brotherhood and freedom for all. In England there was a long war between the people and their King. It will be seen, however, that there is a vital difference between these European revolutions and the 1857 struggle. The conflicts in Europe had been between the people and their own Kings. In India the clash was not between the people and their Kings as such. It was against a foreign power which had entered this country as shopkeepers and having captured all power wanted to convert the nation by the subtle use of its sword and sceptre. It is interesting to recall here how the first European that landed on the Indian shore replied that it was "Spices and Christians" which attracted him to India. It is an indisputable

fact that the European power came to India for trade and religion. In the rivalry amongst themselves the English survived, stayed and conquered India. They had reached the stage when they could fully accomplish their object namely to drain the gold of India to their mother-country and turn the whole land into Christendom. It is unnecessary to cite the numerous declarations of highest dignatories from the members of the Parliament down to the lowest clergyman in support of the above fact. It was at this time, just a decade before 1857, that the Indians tumbled on the knowledge of the ultimate purpose of the English aggrandisement in India. It is the sad realisation that had created a seathing discontent in the classes and the masses.

The Indian people were fighting foreign aggressors right for one thousand years before the 1957 struggle. The conquest of India by Islam and Christianity was not accepted by the Hindus. A proper view of history will show that the Hindus were fighting the Muslim emperors and Kings all along. It was out of this continuous struggle for more than 800 years that the Hindus had beaten the Muslims all over India. They had hammered their thrones. While the Muslim supremacy had been thus nearly liquidated by the Marathas, the English people had surreptiously spread their shops and factories of the East India Company. Except Shivaji, Madhav Rao Peshwa and Nana Phadanvis who could see with their penetrating intellect the danger in the rise of the English, all

other Kings and commoners thought them to be merely shopkeepers. The English established themselves first only as traders and merchants, then money lenders and Managers of the Kingdoms. With their sudden rise to factual power behind almost all the thrones, they began to deny claims of Indian princes and liquidate their Kingdoms. It was at this time, when Lord Dalhousie denied the claims of many sons of ruling houses when the Indians realised that they had been sold. The realisation is finely expressed in the words of Nana Saheb Peshwa who asked the English, "How is it, that in my own country, I am an outlaw and you are the master? Who gave you the right to rule here?"

So then it was against this foreign power which had usurped the whole of India, that the people rose in action. This is very clear from the declarations and the avowed objects of the leaders of the 1857 Revolution, like Bahadur Saheb, Nana Saheb Peshwa, Maulvi Ahmed Shah, Rani of Jhansi, Tantiya Tope and the thousands of Sepoys. It was to drive away the British usurpers; it was to save and protect the religion from the calamity of Christian aggression; it was to arrest the monopolising trade of the English shopkeepers who had planned to kill all indigenous native industries and commerce etc. that the people rose against the British. The failure, for whatever reasons, plunged this country into the lowest depth of slavery—such as never before experienced.

The price which India had to pay for the

failure cannot be counted in gold or silver, though even that, if taken into consideration, is so tremendous as defies all measurements. It is the difference between the pinnacle of prosperity and the abyss of poverty. Think for a moment, in the middle of the last century, India had everything that the Western world possessed. In what article of trade or manufacture did India not excel any other country? From sea-going ships to sewing needles India was self-content. Whether in raw material or in the finished products, India's goods compared supremely fine and were in great demand everywhere. Especially in the cotton manufacture, there was no country on earth which could think of what India produced. What happened to this trade of India? The Imperial Trade Policy massacred Indian technicians and manufacturers and turned the artisans merely into "hewers of wood and drawers of water". We simply became the suppliers of materials and the purchaser of English products. This is the price which India had to pay for its failure in the Revolution.

Some people say that the coming of British was a blessing in disguise in that, it was they, who introduced Science and Technology in this country. This is poor consolation and a falacious argument. There are many other nations much more backward than what India was then, which have indeed risen to a very high scientific progress without the English aid. Could not have India done the same?

The coming of the British introduced an alien system of economic order and structure in this country, which has turned out to be a curse for the character and genius of Indian people. Great thinkers like Gandhi and Vinoba have been seriously lamenting the change in the social order of India caused by the contact and the impact of the English people on India. We have not been able yet, after cutting off the chains of bondage, to come out of this foreign influence which has vitiated our national life.

Figures clearly show that the Christian population of India was insignificant before the '57 Revolution. It is true that Christianity came to India very early in the first century after Christ. But that advent to the South was for different reasons. And though Christianisation was the main object since the landing of the Europeans which was with very cruel vengeance taken in hand by the Portuguese, yet they had not become a menace. The English shopkeepers and Managers of Indian Kingdoms after having swallowed all the territory in their hands, as managers always do, began to advance the cause of Christianity in a very subtle manner. At every stage and in every field of life it became apparent that these despotic rulers were pursuing a policy of Christianisation of India according to the proclaimed objects of their highest dignatories. If the revolution had succeeded, it is not difficult to imagine how the Christians would have been treated. What happened in the first century before Christ with Buddhists,

at the hands of King Pushyamitra, would have been possibly repeated in regard to Christians in the year after 1857. But the failure has changed the whole complex of the society. The community which lived at the mercy of the nation has to-day even after freedom, become a menace to the national race of Hindusthan. Christianity is now taken to be a religion of this country and Christians have come to stay as a part and parcel of India.

So also with Islam. After its career of conquest by fire and sword, Islam had been tamed, by the Hindus at the end of the 18th century. There was a sure sign that religion would have been reduced to an innocuous faith, in the complex fold of Hindu philosophy. It was on that account that the 1857 uprising showed a spectacular unity amongst the Hindus and Muslims who could come to an understanding to drive away this common danger of the Christian Power. But the failure foiled this unity for ever. The process of absorption and merger come to a halt. It was the result of this failure and on account of the machiavelian diplomacy of the British that a wedge was permanently driven between the two sections. The result was the partition of India which has been the greatest curse on the nation. This is then the incalculable price which we had to pay on account of the failure of the revolution. But for the defeat in that struggle, though it is difficult to say what would have been the relations of Hindus and Muslims, at least one thing is certain that this ancient land would not



have been divided.

And lastly one more curse according to me is that shameful idea born of the conjunction of Christianity with Hinduism, the Secularism. Secularism as such in its pure and scientific definition is not a thing to be despised. In fact the Hindu theologians and political philosophers have always pleaded for the strictest secularism in state-craft. But this legacy of secularism which has been kept by the English is not yet being discarded as a disadvantageous burden.

Let the Hindu realise the price which his nation had to pay for the failure in that great struggle, and there is no doubt, he will make a strenuous effort to recoup the damage and losses. It is not possible to deal thoroughly with this important subject at length in the limits of so short an article. Therefore as I have said, I simply pose a question for thinkers and historians to answer. What is the price we had to pay for the failure in the struggle? It is only then that we can make an endeavour to redeme our heritage by following the correct lines of action.

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# 1857—Some Reflections

By K. A. Subramania Iyer,  
*Vice-Chancellor-Designate, Lucknow University.*

The year 1857 did not leave such a profound impression on the people of South India as it did on the people of Northern India. Except for those who read about it in their history books, the masses of South India are quite unaware that anything big happened in the country in that year. In Northern India on the other hand, particularly in Oudh, even the ordinary villager who cannot sign his name knows about 1857 and the terrible events that took place in that year. The year 57 is looked upon with superstitious awe, there is something inauspicious about it and some people seem to take it for granted that something dreadful would happen this year merely because it is also a 57. One cannot explain all this if what took place in 1857 was a mere 'mutiny' as people of my generation learnt in subject.

The literature on the events of 1857 is stupendous and yet one cannot say that the last word has already been said about them. Far from it. So far the writers have been chiefly of British nationality and even the best among them tend to be one-sided and self-righteous in their description of the events.

It is amazing that even after a whole century British historians are unable to present an objective account of the events of that year. The fact is that until ten years ago the British were ruling this country and that political fact, consciously or unconsciously, influenced British writers on the subject.

Some of those who have written on the events of 1857 were upright men and great scholars, but the atmosphere in which they lived prevented them from being objective and impartial. They were expected to say certain things and not to say certain others and consciously or unconsciously they conformed themselves to these expectations. Edward Thompson's 'The Other Side of the Medal' (1925) was the attempt of an honest Englishman to reveal certain facts which had been suppressed or insufficiently stressed by the official historians. Indian historians have not yet really come into the field. Though Savarkar's 'War of Indian Independence, 1857' is based on considerable research, there is also a great deal of passion behind it and quite naturally so.

It is very important that professional Indian historians should come into the field. I hope that when they do they will not try to do the opposite of what British historians have done but would be really objective and impartial and would base their conclusions on a detailed study of all relevant original documents. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth can be adopted as a maxim not merely by court-witnesses, but also by historians.

If the task is done in this spirit, the conclusions, whatever they be, will not create resentment in any circles but would help to promote friendship and understanding between Indians and the British.

Even on the basis of what has been published so far, it is clear that the events of 1857 amounted to much more than a 'mutiny'. No historian really maintains that the order relating to greased cartridges alone could explain all that happened. All historians have something to say on the political and other causes which had created discontent, not only among the soldiers but also among the general population, particularly of Oudh. In many localities, the civil population had revolted before the soldiers did. Another proof that it was not a mere mutiny is that in suppressing the revolt, the British destroyed a very large number of civilians showing that they looked upon the whole country as being in revolt.

What sickens one most while reading accounts of the events of 1857-1859 is the part which cruelty played in them. We are now living in a world more accustomed to news of cruelty and violence than were people of the middle of the nineteenth century. Because of this, it might be said that our sense of its savagery and immorality has been somewhat blunted. The mass violence of the first world war, with its mass destruction of non-combatant women and children by bombing and its concentration camps where literally millions of non-combatant human beings were done to death in

cold blood according to plan by circles which had inherited a more than a thousand year old Christian tradition, went still further in making us take cruelty for granted. The threat of a third war with the possibility of all civilisation being completely wiped off the surface of the earth tends to make us look upon all the cruelties of the past as trivial affairs. And yet cruelty is not something which one should get accustomed to or take for granted. To do so would result in a gradual brutalisation of life. In any case the cruelties of 1857 must not be judged by our blunted sense of today.

One tragic result of the way in which British writers have dealt with the events of 1857 has been the spreading of the belief that Indians are cruel by nature. This belief appears to us to be particularly unjust because shedding of blood and inflicting of violence have always seemed repugnant to us whereas we find people in some other parts of the world much more ready to indulge in both. Never in all our history has anything comparable to the planned cruelties of the concentration camps of Europe ever happened. I am aware of the deplorable communal riots of 1947 but they were not planned cruelties, they were the results of sudden outbursts of passion and they came to an end as soon as the passion subsided. Of course, much cruelty took place during these riots and we are ashamed of it but we feel that worse things have happened elsewhere.

As for 1857, it is true that under provocation some cruel acts were committed by Indians. It is natural

that the British Government of the day should have suppressed the revolt vigorously. Suppression naturally implied punishment including execution of those who were guilty. But all evidence points to the fact that the British were seized by a frenzy of revenge and indulged in wanton acts of cruelty beside which the initial acts of cruelty of the rebels paled into insignificance. Whence came this terrible indulgence in cruelty on the part of the British? Was it based on racial antipathy? Was it the inevitable result of alien rule? Would the British Government of the year 1857 have suppressed a mutiny in England in the same manner? Had religious antipathy anything to do with it? One is led to ask oneself such a question because some of those who were responsible for these cruelties referred to God and the Bible while committing them.

Those of us who have lived in England know that the British people have a great dislike of cruelty. They have a society for the prevention of cruelty to children and other one for the prevention of cruelty to animals and excellent work is being done by these societies. Apart from this, life in England is full of mutual kindness and consideration and is dominated by a sense of co-operation in a common cause. All this has resulted in much refinement and civilisation. It is a pleasure to live in England and watch the way in which the English people act towards one another. This only deepens the mystery. Whence came the cruelty in which the British people indulged only a hundred years ago?

It would be a mistake not to recognise the many



deeds of valour which the British as individuals or as a group did during those years. I once visited the Lucknow Residency in the company of an Englishman and I could see that the place made a profound impression upon him. He must have felt very proud of being an Englishman. There is certainly something great in the fact that a handful of British people besieged by a numerous Indian Army in a hostile country, defended themselves with extra-ordinary courage for months. Their courage and discipline, their patriotism, their sense of solidarity will always elicit the admiration of impartial students of the events of 1857. The British have taken great care to preserve the memory of the great deeds done by their countrymen. All the documents relating to such deeds have been preserved and there are public monuments commemorating some of these deeds.

But can the same thing be said of the many deeds of valour which were performed by Indians? Vincent A. Smith, the historian, says, "On the other page of the account may be reckoned uncounted deeds of heroism and numerous instances of loyalty, kindness and unselfish devotion which do honour to human nature." This is the admission of a British historian. It is not time to do justice to the authors of these uncounted deeds of heroism? The greatness of the Rani of Jhansi had been recognised even by her enemies. But what about humble folk of whom none took notice at the time and whose very names have been forgotten? Here is a task which awaits the investigation of the Indian historians.

# Mutiny Days in Calcutta

*By B. V. Roy, M. A.*

The Sepoy uprisings of the year 1857, known in Indian history as the "Sepoy Mutiny", sent a wave of terror, with killings, arson and loot, all over India, its greatest impact being felt in northern India. The city of Calcutta was never directly involved in the troubles, but many indirect effects were felt here. It was at Barrackpore, 14 miles to the north of Calcutta that the first open manifestation of the mutinous spirit among the Sepoys occurred, on the 29th March, 1857. Sepoy Mangal Pandey, attached to the 34th Bengal Native Infantry, refused to obey orders at parade and attacked the Adjutant. He was arrested, tried by Court Martial on the 6th April and executed on the 8th April.

In the forward to a recently published historical novel dealing with the Mutiny period the writer, John Masters, says :—

"At last an incident set off the explosion. A rumour spread that the cartridges of a new pattern rifle were being greased with a mixture of pig's fat and cow's fat ; the cartridges were supposed to be bitten open to get at the powder. The pig is unclean to Mohamedans, and the cow is sacred to Hindus ; all the sepoys belonged to one religion or the other. So the house cracked. The world cracked and the British were running together with the people, burning, shooting, stabbing, strangling."

The 10th of May was the day fixed for a general uprising all over the country, and for months previously, messengers ran from village to village, place to place, carrying two "chapatis" (coarse bread), one large and one small. On delivery to the headman of a village, the larger was torn into five pieces and the smaller into ten, signifying the 10th day of the 5th month (May) as the date fixed for a general uprising and the slogans whispered were "remember Mangal Pandey" and "kill or be killed."

Any account of a historical event by a "man on the spot" is always interesting, and I will give here an account of the state of affairs in Calcutta during the year 1857, as recorded by an Englishman in his letters written home. At the same time I will quote the warning given by a writer on the Mutiny, viz :—

"If your interest in the Mutiny is aroused, you will find that any history of it is exciting, but look to see whether an Englishman or an Indian wrote it, and make allowance accordingly."

In the year 1856, Dr. E. B. Cowell, M. A., D. C. L., L. L. D., was appointed Professor of History in the newly established Presidency College in Calcutta. He arrived with his wife and they stayed in India eight years from 1856 to 1864 (After his return to England, Dr. Cowell was appointed Professor of Sanskrit in Cambridge University and held the post from 1867 to 1903). In Calcutta they put up at Spence's Hotel, and at the time of the Mutiny troubles were in that Hotel. With this introduction, I will now quote extracts from Dr. Cowell's letters relating

to the Mutiny, allowing him to speak for himself. He makes first mention of the troubles in his letter dated 3rd June, 1857 :—

“You will have been anxious too, about a very different matter, which will make this May one of the most memorable months of British Indian history. It will come like a thunder-clap in England, I fancy .....I little thought that I should arrive in such stirring and alarming times.....on Sunday, May 16th our Khidmutgar said at breakfast that there was a rumour that the sepoys had mutinied at Delhi and massacred a great many Sahibs. This was all I learned that day, but for the last three months there has been a mutinous spirit spreading through all the Native Army of Bengal.....Nobody seems to think much of it. The sepoys were despised and we rested in our fancied self-security.....The fact is we have misunderstood the Hindus as a nation. Because the educated nations of our large cities have begun to disbelieve Hinduism, and to throw off the restriction of their shastras, we have fancied that the great bulk of Hindus—the uneducated multitude—have the same doubts and disbeliefs..... The mass of the uneducated people believe their system as much as ever ; it is only when education has spread that Hinduism is shaken, and education does not touch the immense mass.....the natives feel that Hinduism has begun to be shaken, that the system itself is beginning to totter ; an idea has sprung up that Government intends to make them all Christians by

force. A new kind of cartridge has lately been introduced into the army, and this has furnished a pretext, by which the already existing feeling is fired into a blaze. Some unknown designing men spread the idea that these cartridges had been greased with beef-fat to break the Hindu's caste, and with hog's lard for the Mohamedans, and this has become a fixed idea in the native mind, which no argument or threats can eradicate. Regiment after Regiment have refused to take these cartridges.....

"At Meerut, the Native Regiments there refused in this way, and the Commanding Officer, being backed by a regiment of English stationed there, held a Court Martial and sentenced a hundred of the ringleaders to very severe imprisonments. Instead of guarding against any attempt at rescue, the Europeans went away their quarters some two miles off. That evening the native soldiers rescued their imprisoned comrades, sort their European officers, murdered all the Europeans they could find and burnt their houses, and got away just before the European Regiment came up.....

"We have been in some danger in Calcutta, but I think not since we knew of it. Our danger really was in that week which preceded the arrival of that news as we were utterly unprepared.....volunteer bands were formed, everybody armed, even I bought a pair of pistols, which lay always ready on my bedroom table."

In his next letter dated 14th June, Dr. Cowell writes regarding "Panic Sunday" in Calcutta, as follows :—

"On Sunday morning, June 14th, about a quarter past six, a friend came in very hurriedly to say that there was going to be a rising and that the troops had mutinied in Barrackpore and were marching on Calcutta. He advised us to take refuge in a ship on the river, and gave us the name of a vessel. He himself had left his house with his family and was going to take refuge in a friend's house near the fort. You will easily judge that my dislike of hurry and precipitation came to my aid, and I determined to hear something more before I took such a step. On enquiries in the Hotel, I found it was not so bad as this, though quite sufficient to cause alarm. In the middle of the previous night (Saturday) Government had received notice that at 4 a. m. the troops at Barrackpore had planned a revolt, intending to march on Calcutta, if successful, there to be joined by all the fanatics and rabble of the city. Government did not let the grass grow under their feet, but at once sent off all the troops they could spare, and sent for a regiment from Chinsurah to march on to Barrackpore to help if any row arose. Every *ghari* was seized by Government to convey these troops, and consequently we hold no *ghari* that day and were forced to keep at home, as it is too hot now for 'salkies.' Every body is armed, and we form a body of 50 men at Spence's, so this is a little fortress in itself. The day wore away amid contradictory and



flying rumours ; until about 5 p. m. as I was looking out from our window, I saw to my amazement a Hackney or bullock cart enter filled with muskets and boxes of ammunition. These, I found, had been supplied by Government to make the Hotel secure, as it was to be one of the appointed places of refuge in case of emergency. These arms were given to those who had none...I got a musket for myself with a bayonet and 20 cartridges, and these, with my pistols, made me well armed. At the same time, by a bold stroke, all the native troops in Calcutta were disarmed.....All night the city was in great commotion, bands of patrols guarded the city, and you continually heard the challenge of sentinels and the changes of the guard—but no riot took place.”

In later letters, Dr. Cowell gives brief account of the situation up-country, of the siege of Lucknow and other affairs, remarking that “here in Calcutta we know nothing of it through a Merciful Providence, but a very few miles out of Calcutta life and property are insecure.”

I will conclude by describing a stirring incident which occurred at Howrah Station during the Mutiny days. Colonel Neill had arrived in Calcutta with the Madras Fusiliars from Madras, bound for Benares. At that time the East Indian Railway terminated at Ranigunge, and of course the troops would have to march the rest of the way to Benares. There was considerable delay in getting the troops across the river, as there was no Howrah bridge then. The Station Master refused to detain the train after its usual starting time, on which Col.

Neill ordered the seizure of the Station Master and others, and kept them under military guard until all his troops had arrived. This incident serves, if nothing else, to show how little the seriousness of the situation up-country was realised in Calcutta by the Railway and other authorities. All in all, therefore, it may be said that the Mutiny troubles hardly affected Calcutta in any way.

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### **The Order**

"Do not attempt to meet the regular columns of the infidels, because they are supeprior to you indisciplined and *bandobast* and have big guns; but watch their movements, guard all the *ghats* on the rivers, intercert their communications, stop their supplies, cut their *daks* and posts, and keep constantly hanging about their camps, give them no rest."

General Order issued by Khan Bahadur Khan.

### **Execution of the Order**

"Never has the enemy been met without being routed, scattered, and his guns taken, but though constantly beaten he ever more rallies and appears again ready for a fresh encounter. No sooner is one city trken or another relieved, than some other one is threatened... No sooner is one district pronounced safe through the influx of British troops, than another is disturbed and convulsed. No sooner is a highway opened between places of importance, than it is again closed, and all communications for a year are cut off. No sooner are the mutineers and rebelsscourd out of one locality, then they reappear with double or treble force, in another. No sooner does a mobile column force its way through hostile ranks than they re-occupy the territory behind it. All gaps in the numbers of foes seems to be instantaneously filled up and no permanent clearance or impressoin appears anywhere to be made."

Alexander Duff : *The Indian Rebellion* Pp. 223

the prosecution of Veer Savarkar, Madanlal Dhingra, and myself. Bodkin and Travers Humphreys were in Court in 1909 when I proclaimed my belief in the Republic of India from dock and described the 1857 uprising as the Indian War of Independence, to the awed silence of the Court. At the time, I was the only Englishman who dared to disown the description, "The Indian Mutiny" and in its place substitute the challenging phrase, so hateful to British Imperialist ears, "*The Indian War of Independence*".

I was arrested at Shephards Bush, West London on Wednesday, August 25, 1909 and appeared at Bow Street Police Court the next day, on a warrant, charging me with writing, printing, and publishing "a certain scandalous and seditious libel" in the "Indian Sociologist" for August 1909. I conducted my own case and A. H. Bodkin appeared for the Treasury.

The case was remanded till Saturday and I spoke for 50 minutes, to show cause why the case should not be sent to the Central Criminal Court. I referred to the events of 1857 as "what is described by English writers as 'Sepoy Mutiny' or 'The Indian Mutiny' and stated that "it would be described in History by future historians as "*The Indian War of Independence*."

The case went for trial at the Central Criminal Court on Friday, September 10, 1908, before Mr. Justice Coleridge. Two days before this, Sir Forrest Fulton, the Recorder of London, in charging the Grand Jury to return a true bill against me, declared that Shyamji Krishnavarma and myself were guilty of writing and

publishing "a great deal of dangerous and pestilential matter."

In conducting my defence, the ordinary press stated that I was calm, boyish, and defiant throughout the proceedings, and delivered a Hyde Park oration from the dock.

The prosecution was conducted by Sir William Robson, the Attorney General, A. H. Bodkin, as his Junior Counsel, Travers Hymphreys, and other counsel.

Here again I insisted my own allegiance to the coming Republic of India and referred to 1857 as "The Indian War of Independence."

The Socialist and Anarchist press denounced me, although I had been associated closely with their propaganda. I was alone, absolutely alone, among English publicists and propagandists in these references to the Republic of India and the 1857 War of Independence.

Indian comrades will understand, therefore, how, today, my heart goes out to these Poona celebrations. \*...

Unable to be present in the flesh, I am with all who join this great celebration in spirit. I feel a great at-oneness with those who honour the immortal memory of all who have joined the choir invisible, having given their all for freedom, believing that freedom would triumph while such triumph seemed beyond all hope of realisation. Such was their faith. For the potency of such patience, for what their endurance has yielded, and for what it will give us yet further, I join my Hindu comrades in honouring them. Almost hundred years of struggle and witnessing that, will not be honoured fully until there exists an unpartitioned India. *Bande Mataram* !

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*Poona celebration was held in the year 1952.*

# How Sepoy Mutiny Reacted on Russia

By P. Shastitko

The first report of a popular uprising in India reached Russia on June 27, 1857, when Khreptovich, the Russian ambassador in London, telegraphed the news to St. Petersburg of the outbreak at Meerut and the seizure of Delhi by the insurgents. On the same day he wrote a memorandum to prince Gorchakov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and appended extracts from the London papers. A detailed description of events was sent by Colonel Ignatiev, Russian military attache in London.

Ignatiev wrote: "The uprising in India is not a chance mutiny of several native regiments against the company, it is rather an expression of the desire of the region to free itself from a hateful foreign yoke." Ignatiev believed the reasons for the mutiny lay in the "abuses of the administrative personnel and the devouring greed of the Company." In Ignatiev's opinion, the Company policy in relation to the Indian states, conducted by the Earl of Dalhousie, led to even the "feudal leaders of India" realising that "sooner or later every convenient piece of land within the reach of the English merchants will be seized by them."

When it appeared in the press, the sensational news from London roused the Russian public opinion. "There

is hardly a question more important, interesting or grave than that of India in the political world today." News from India is awaited with the greatest impatience, the most exciting headlines are 'Indian Post' and 'Correspondence from Calcutta,' ("Fatherland Notes"). "Indian affairs have become the most vital problem of the day. The eyes of all Europe have been fixed on India for five months," the magazine "Russky Vestnik" told its readers.

A furious polemics developed in the newspapers and magazines as to Russia's attitude to the mutiny. The public found it hard to obtain a correct idea of the reasons for the mutiny and how it was developing since the Russian press took most of its material on the subject from English newspapers. That circumstance explained the contradictions and confusion in the viewpoints not only of the different magazines and newspapers but even the views of various writers.

The clearest and most definite opinion about the mutiny was undoubtedly found only among the Russian revolutionary democrats. Their views were expressed in N. A. Dobrolyubov's article "An Opinion of the History and Contemporary State of the East India Company," which appeared in the September issue of the magazine "Sovremennik" (Contemporary), the organ of Russian democracy. N. G. Chernyshevsky, writer and philosopher who headed the Russian revolutionary democratic movement noted with satisfaction that "the article really turned out well."



Dobrolyubov's article was distinguished, for one thing, for its mature approach to the subject. It considered the mutiny not as a chance outburst of dissatisfaction but as a "historically necessary affair." Dobrolyubov began his study of the reasons for the mutiny by investigating all the springs and levers of the East India Company's machinery of exploitation, combining as it did, the insolence of the robber with the greed of the petty shopkeeper.

With complete objectivity Dobrolyubov traced the history of the establishment of British rule in India and the growth of a small company of enterprising merchants into an oligarchy of commercial tycoons. He flatly rejected the claim of historians and journalists who, through naivete or hypocrisy talked of the "civilizing mission of the English". England's ultimate aim is state and private profit and not civilisation, Dobrolyubov wrote.

In his estimate of the Mutiny Dobrolyubov took the side of those who did not regard it as a religious revolt of "fanatical Hindus" or a "Mutiny of soldiers who have gotten out of hand," but as the *emancipatory uprising of people* who had selflessly risen against invaders. He was able to understand that "the people rebelled because they finally detected evil in the very organisation of the British rule."

At the time official Russian view was presented by the newspaper "Russky Invalid," which carried regular and thorough reports on the events in India. On October 13, 1857, the newspaper published a long article by Sergeberg entitled "East Indies Affairs." The author's

sympathies were exclusively on the side of the insurgent Indians. The British lion is accustomed to clawing up the political bodies of states. This time as regards India, it may have to restrain its fierce habits." Sergeberg found the reason for the mutiny in the "English brutal treatment of the Indians (particularly when collecting taxes) and their absolute ignoring human rights."

The highly popular newspaper "Peterburgskie Vedomosti," edited By A. A. Kraevsky, a member of the political group known as "Westerners," also kept its readers well-informed. On July 30 the paper began to run a series called "Letters about East Indies Indignation," in which the author advised his readers to take a critical attitude towards the London papers in as much as "the English," he said, "possess the Roman art of hiding or denying failure," From the history of how British rule was established in India the author drew the conclusion that "the very structure of the Indo-British empire contains in itself an embryo of death." He labelled as nonsense the claims of British journalists that the reason for the mutiny lay in the officers having ignored the religious feelings of the Hindus. (The introduction of those ill-starred cartridges for new rifles.)

As to those who claimed that "enlightened Europe" had a cultural mission in "stagnating, barbaric Asia," the "Peterburgskie Vedomostov" called the thesis unscrupulous Pharisaism, arguing reasonably that "English acquired a vast empire in order not to civilize it but to devour it."

The reason for Russian authors devoting so much

attention to Europe's civilizing role in Asia was that it was the argument used to justify the frank and undisguisedly cynical actions of the colonizers. Reactionary circles in Russia also tried to utilize that jesuitical weapon. The "Russky Vestnik" reflected the opinion of those circles when it said: "We do not sympathize with England's foreign policy; we have points of conflict with her. But we shall always have the magnanimity and conscientiousness to recognise the unity of our tasks. Both England and Russia are called upon to spread light of the European way of life in the moral darkness of stagnating Asia. Here we are allies; there is solidarity between us."

However, justice requires us to note that the opinion of the "Russky Vestnik" did not receive any support from the Russian public. That is quite understandable. Besides sympathizing with the Indian people in their struggle for freedom and independence, the Russian people were themselves still smarting from the insult to their national pride inflicted by British and French arms in the Crimean War of 1854. Hence, their sympathies were on the side of those fighting to free India from the colonial yoke.

The grim echoes of the storm in Hindusthan rolled over the snowy peaks of the Himalayas and across the plains of Russia until they reached St. Petersburg. The progressive section of the Russian public defeated in that storm the power of the first spring squall, forerunner of the coming storms of emancipation.

Soviet scholars study the history of the Indian

Mutiny of 1857-1859 with great interest. That interest is based on an understanding of history not as an aggregate of subjective views but as a corollary of objective laws, a study of which makes it possible to understand the direction in which society is moving. The Indian people's heroic struggle in the past, India's formation into a great power in the present, and the prospectus for her future development make a study of Indian history both fascinating and responsible.

According to the Soviet scholars, the Indian Mutiny is not an isolated incident. The Mutiny in India, the Taiping rebellion in China, Babism in Iran, and the rise of the emancipatory movement in Indonesia all represented the reaction of the peoples to attempts to convert their countries into colonies.

The Mutiny in India was directed against British rule, and peasants and sepoys were its motive force. But besides this there was a feudal force headed by nobles whom the British deposed and who saw an opportunity to regain their lost rights and privileges. The chief weakness of the mutiny obviously lay in lack of organisation.

In spite of the fact that the mutiny was put down it played an exceptionally important role in developing national consciousness in India and laid a firm foundation for joint action on the part of her and colonial forces, irrespective of religion, caste or language.

IN THE FOREIGNERS EYES

# Neighbours And Comrades- In-Arms

*By Ting Tse-liang*

*Professor of History at the North-East  
People's University, China.*

In 1857, exactly a hundred years ago, the people of India rose in revolution against the British invaders of their country. The Chinese people were then in the midst of the Taiping Revolution and at the same time were trying to deal with a fresh British onslaught on their land.

This was not the last time that these two peoples would be waging parallel and interlinked struggles for freedom and independence. The arrival of the Western colonialists in the East in the later years of the fifteenth century cut short the traditionally friendly relations which had existed for 2,000 years between the Chinese and Indian peoples. But Western imperialist aggression and oppression brought them the same sufferings, roused in them the same aspirations for freedom and independence, and led them to wage the same heroic struggle against their common enemy. Up to the middle of the nineteenth century, isolated as they were from each other

they waged their struggles separately, but these struggles were in actual fact closely linked, just as were all the other anti-colonial struggles of the past hundred years in the Asian-African area.

Those were fateful days. The Taiping Revolution broke out in China in 1850 and the feudal rulers of the Ching dynasty soon found themselves in difficulties. The Western colonialists headed by Great Britain saw this as a rare opportunity to seize more privileges and interests in China and thrust her further into the pit of colonialism. A fresh attack on China was launched in the autumn of 1856. Their first sally against Canton, however, collapsed in face of the stubborn resistance of the local people.

In 1857, Britain, in collaboration with France, prepared a fresh blow against China. J. Bowring, the British Minister to China, asked Lord Canning, Governor-General of India, to send reinforcements. These were gathered, but in May the Indian national revolution began to sweep that country like a prairie fire. The whole position of the British imperialists in India was threatened. In early June the British expedition against China under Lord Elgin arrived at Singapore. Here he received an urgent message from Canning requesting him, as the official in charge of all war preparations against China, to send back to India all the British forces already gathered from various places for the forthcoming attack. Arriving in Hongkong Elgin later received several other similar communications from Canning.



Although his original instructions were to start the attack on China immediately after reaching Hongkong, Elgin was compelled to take part of his expeditionary force to Calcutta to join in the campaign to suppress the Indian patriots. This delayed the attack on China until December of that year.

The Indian revolution not only upset the time-table for the British invasion of China but also gave encouragement to the Chinese people in their struggle against the invaders. Hua Ting-chieh, the magistrate of Nanhai County, Kwangtung Province, writing at the time on these events, says that when the news of the British setbacks in India became known in Hongkong, it was quickly "passed on to the people of Kwangtung. It is on everyone's lips. The people's joy knows no bounds."

At this very time a number of Indians then living in China were fighting side by side with Chinese in the ranks of the Taiping forces. Documentary evidence of the time shows that between fifty and sixty Indians fought bravely as volunteers with the Taiping troops in the battle for the county town of Shaohsing in Chekiang Province, in February 1863. It was they who killed in action Tariff de Moidery, a French officer who fought for the imperial government. Three Indian volunteers fell in action on the side of the Taiping forces in May of the same year in street fighting at Taitsang, Kiangsu Province. These men had served in the Fifth Bombay Regiment.\* They had been transferred to Shanghai

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\* A. Wilson : The Ever Victorious Army, P. 152.

from India in 1862 against their will and later joined the Taiping forces. In October of the same year, an Englishman named Lindley (better known by his Chinese name Lin-le) with an Indian companion left Shanghai for Soochow where they joined the Taiping troops.\*\*

These were the beginnings of the new comradeship of the Chinese and Indian peoples.

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\*\* Lin-le : Tai-Ping Tien-Kwoh, Vol. II, PP. 632-636.



# Our First National War

*By Amalendu Das Gupta*

The Sepoy Mutiny is generally regarded as our first war of Independence against British rule in India. But that was not its major significance. As a matter of fact, it was not our first war of Independence. Several revolts had burst out in India before this outbreak. Indians had never allowed the British to rule over them peacefully. The major significance of this revolt lies in its national character. The preceeding revolutions were not only local, in character, we also find no expression of unified national sentiment in them. The Sepoy war was not only wider in its scope and dimension, it was also engineered a blue-print of our State-hood that was to be at the expiry of the British Raj. And to the nationalist India that was its most significant contribution.

In his letter to the Rajas of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Alwar etc. Emperor Bahadur Shah wrote: "It is my ardent wish to see that the Firinghi is driven out of Hindustan by all means and at any cost. It is my ardent wish that the whole of Hindustan should be free. But the revolutionary war that is being waged for the purpose will not be crowned with success unless a man capable of sustaining the whole burden of the movement who can organize and concentrate the different forces of the nation and will unify the whole people in himself, comes

forward to guide the rising. I have no desire left of ruling over India, after the expulsion of the English for my own aggrandizement. If all of you native Rajas are ready to unsheathe your sword to drive away the enemy, then I am willing to resign my imperial powers and authority in the hands of any confederacy of native princes who are chosen to exercise it.”\*

The other national character of this revolution is found in its positive basis of Hindu-Muslim unity. The British authority had much hope in the efficacy of its traditional policy of *divide et impera*. On the 1st May, 1857, Sir Henry Lawrence wrote to Lord Canning: “I shall watch for the differences of the feelings between the two communities.” But the revolution had generated the harmonious feeling between the communities so much so that Aitchson had to admit in despair: “In this instance we could not play off the Mohamedan against the Hindu.”†

A spirit of conciliation and mutual understanding developed in both the communities. Emperor himself prohibited the cow-slaughter. Nana Shahib declared his allegiance to the Emperor, and along with his ancestral Bhagwa-Zenda, unfurled the Crescent flag. He also used Hizri era. His principal adviser was Azimullah Khan.

This united move of the Hindus and Muslims remains no doubt about the national character of this revolution. The Sikh betrayal came only after the tide of the

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\* G. T. Metcalfe : Two Native Narratives, P. 226.

† Aitchson : Lord Lawrance, P. 77.

revolution had turned against the rebels. Aitchson wrote: "Sikhs enlisted but not in great numbers. They held back until Delhi had fallen and then recruits came in thousands." The Government was perturbed more by the national character of this rising than by the revolt of the Sepoys. George Campbell had written in his memories that "Lord Canning's mercy was always chiefly in favour of the Sepoys; he judged much more harshly those of the civil population who had been led into acts of rebellion."\*

Though the revolt was basically inspired by economic and political causes, the narrow religious policy of the British authority had contributed to make it also a religious war of the Indian people. Mangles, the Chairman of the Directors of the East India Company, said in the House of Commons: "Providence has entrusted the extensive Empire of Hindustan to England in order that the banner of Christ should wave triumphant from one end of India to the other. Everyone must exert all his strength that there may be no dilatoriness on any account in continuing in the contrary the grand work of making all Indians Christians." And if we read along with this speech, the manifestoes of the Missionaries published in India and that time, we will find the clue why a certain section of the Indian people respected the motives of the British authority in installing Telegraphs, Steamships and Railways etc. In one of such manifes-

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\*George Campbell: *Memorils of my Indian Carreer*, p. i, 283.

toes in 1856, they proclaimed that "Railways and Steamships had not only facilitated material union of all the races of men, but also had become the instrument of accomplishing their spiritual union under one faith," but there was no doubt to anybody that "one faith" was that of Christianity !

In this way, temporal and spiritual causes had mingled together to form a total opposition to British authority in India. Though the religious feeling strengthened the security of the rebellion, it did not, thanks to the communal understanding, make it fanatical. The Christian suffered not because of their religious faith, but because of their alignment with the enemy. "Those natives who had been taught English were generally, and those who were converted to Christianity were invariably loyal."\* So the relation of the revolutionary and loyal could not be normal and happy one, especially in the furnace of the national war. The English educated Indians suffered no less for the same reason.

The English rulers tried their best to undermine this nationalist content of the revolution. Their historians Sir John Seely branded it as a "wholly unpatriotic and selfish Sepoy Mutiny with no native leadership and no popular support." Consciously or unconsciously being influenced by them and their conception of the dynamics of social progress, even there were some eminent Indians who could not support this revolt from the core of their heart. So we see that, not only the imperial

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\* F. Rice Holmes : A History of Indian Mutiny, P.49.



interest of Britain and the vested interest of her Indian satellite, but also her cultural subjugation played no less a part in crushing the revolt.

There is no doubt that the Sepoys were in the forefront of this revolution. One day they were the mainstay of British authority in conquering India. But after the completion of the conquest they were no longer needed, and their position became as precarious as that of the other Indians. From a long time the anti-British sentiment was smouldering in the people's heart. The discontent of the Sepoys acted as a trigger to that ready gun. What generally happens in times of revolution, also happened here, people from different walk of life in innumerable numbers joined the revolution from their respective angles. Nana Shahib, the Begum of Oudh, the Rani of Jhanshi, Khan Bahadur Khan of Berillie and several other dispossessed kings as well as legions of common men inspired with patriotic spirit plunged into it. In the first twelve months of the struggle thirty thousands of Sepoys were killed in the battle-front, and almost ten thousands of armed civilians perished in encounters with the British. L. Trotter had computed that "the loss of life among the Sepoys through wounds, hardships and judicial sentences, must have exceeded a hundred thousand within two years. Of the other rebels slain in that period, the total must have been greater. Nor had the conquerors came out of the trial without cruel loss."\* It was calculated in 1857 that due

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\* L. Trotter : India Under Queen Victoria, P.ii, 89.

to the losses of treasuries, non-collection of revenue and destruction of public property in Mutiny, the Government was running a deficit of £15,000,000. "The suppression of the Mutiny added to the public debt of India £ 46,000,000, that is a little over three-fourths of the total debt of the Government on the outbreak of the revolt.....The strain on the finances was so great that in October, 1857, the Bank of Bengal expressed its inability to make further advances on Government paper."\*

The strength and dimension of this revolt can well be judged in proper perspective when one compares it with European events of its time. The rebels had more than 100,000 sq. miles and a population of 38,000,000—almost equal to that of Italy—under their control. From the fact of the British casualties in the Crimean Wars, one can confidently say that the rebels had shown at least equal valour and intensity against British as that of the contemporary Russian Power. At Lucknow the Indians faced an army of 36,000 British troops, while in the historic siege of Sebastopol, their number was only 26,000.

The wide operation of this revolution bespeaks its mass-character. People from different walk of life plunged into it. In Meerat and Alipore, people incited the Sepoys to join the Mutiny. Those who sided with British were boycotted by the people as was happened in Patna. Where people did not dare to join the revolt openly, they had withdrawn all their co-operation with

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\*Asoka Mehta : 1857—The Great Rebellion, P. 37.

British. General Havelock could not get a boat and a boatman to ferry his soldiers accross a river. At Kawnpore the British forced the labourer to work, but they quited the job in the dark of night. With the collapse of the British authority people armed themselves to defend their freedom. When Bakht Khan marched towards Delhi with Sepoys, people took the initiative of defending their Rohilkhand. G. B. had written that "in four great provinces of our empire—in Oudh, in Rohilkhand, in Bundelkhand and in Sagar and Narmada teritory—the great bulk of people rose against the British rule. In Western Bihar, in many districts of Patna division, in Agra division, and in parts of this Meerath division, the rising of the people and the Sepoys were almost simultaneous in point of time"\*.

Though nobody can deny today the mass-character of this revolt, there are people who have doubted its validity from the point of its class-character. Their judgement has been vitiated by the feudal leadership of the revolt and some other spurious causes like religious arrogance and apathy towards Railways and Steamships etc. According to them, if the Mutiny had been a successful one, the progress of India that was in the process, would have shattered down into feudal anarchy.

The Indo-British contact, no doubt, had created a revolutionary situation in our country. But it was also

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\* G. B. Malleson : History of the Indian Mutiny, P. 487.

a fact that, that revolution could not be materialised due to the British rule. From the Palassey to Sepoy war, was a hundred years, and from the sad experience of this period, Indians tried to learn many thing from their European master, especially the indispensibility of their national stand and the unity among people; and in Sepoy war we find their first conscious menifestations. Had the Mutiny been a successful one there was no reason that the Industrialisation of India would have suffered. The history of Japan shows that a feudal leadership can also be a pioneer of modernisation. Moreover, in the furnace of the revolution many prejudices of the people would have burned down into ashes. The enfield cartridge that was supposed to be the igniting agent of the revolution was freely used by the revolutionaries themselves. Sepoy Mutiny was pregnant with greater possibilities than that of the Commodor Perrie.

It is a fact that the dispossessed feudal lords played an important role in this uprising. But the general people also played no less important a part in it. Inspite of its feudal leadership, there is ample proof that in the alchemy of this revolution, India was turning towards democratic tendencies, and after the victory, the process would have accelerated further. We find the imprints of democracy in the revolutionary Governments of Delhi and Lucknow. The position of the Emperor was almost like that of a modern constitutional monarch. J. Talboys Wheeler reported on this point: The Government of Delhi "seems to have been sort of constitutional Milocracy. The King was king and honoured as such,

like a constitutional monarch ; but instead of Parliament, he had a Council of soldiers, in whom power ves'ed, and of whom he was in no degree a military commander. No Arabic or Persian names, forms or terms appear to have been introduced ; but, on the contrary, English terms and modes of business were generally adopted. All petitions seem to have been presented to the King, but the great authority to which all of them on all matters were referred (by order endorsed on the petition) was the 'Court', a body composed of a number of Colonels, a Brigade-major and the Secretary." \*

With the success of the revolution these democratic trends would have expanded further into Indian society and its feudal basis would have burst thereby into pieces.

As a matter of fact the revolution failed because of the vested interest defended by the British authority. The native princes did not join the revolution. Canning rightly said :

"If the Scindia joins the Mutiny, I shall have to pack off tomorrow." In spite of the feudal leadership the princes did not join it, because they found their total destruction in its offing. Instead of working as an "unconscious agent" of progress in India, the British had played historically the most reactionary role in Indian polity. That the vested interests were substantial and dependent on the British will be seen from the following table quoted from a remarkable study on the Mutiny.

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\* J. Talboys Wheeler : India Under British Rule, (1886) p. 265,

The distribution of gross revenue of the British authority at that time was :

Native States	...	£13, 000, 000
Rent free lands etc	...	5, 000 000
Sacrificed by the		
Permanent Settlement in Bengal...		2, 000, 000
Political pensions, assignments	...	2, 500, 000
		<u>£22, 500, 000</u>
Revenue in British India	..	25, 300, 000
Grand Total	...	<u>£47, 800, 000</u>

Nearly half of the revenue was alienated to subsidize a native base for British rule in India.\* In defending the Permanent Settlement and the loss it entailed Lord Bentinck said : "If, however, security was wanting against extensive and popular tumult or revolution, I should say that the Permanent Settlement, which though a failure in many other respects and i's most important essentials, has the great advantage at least of having created a vast body of landed proprietors deeply interested in the continuance of British Dominion and having complete command over the masses." How these expectations from the side were fulfilled will be seen from the following extract from a memorial addressed in December, 1857, by the Zamindars of Bengal under the leadership of Mehatab Chandra, Maharaja of Burdwan, to the Governor General.

They said ; "so essentially have they identified their

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\*Asoka Mehta : Ibid ph. 64.



interests with rulers...(they) have in every part of the scene of the Mutinies been exposed to the same rancour, and treated with the same cruelty, which the mutineers and their misguided countrymen have displayed towards the British within their reach."

The vested interest of the country was against this revolution. But the revolution had also its own defects. It flared up in a most unfavourable situation on Indian side. The Crimean and Chinese Wars were just ended. In the early part of this year Persia had been defeated and a treaty of friendship was promulgated with Afghan rulers, and as such, the British was relieved off threats from Bolan and Khyber Passes. So internationally the rebels were not only isolated, they had to face the full might of the British Empire. The British troops were equipped with the most up-to-date arms, whereas the rebels had to fight mostly with talwars. But inspite of this, if the revolution had broken out simultaneously, as had been planned, even in areas where it ultimately did flare up, there is little doubt that the British power would have paralysed. But the major defects of the revolt were perhaps in its leadership. It had its appeal to all the classes of our people, but not to peasant class—the largest section of our community. The inability of the leaders to rally the peasantry to their side, foredoomed their cause. Along with the class-cause, there was also caste-cause that worked against the revolution. For the thick layer of the oppressive casteism, the message of nationalism could not reach into the lower strata of our society. The Sepoys of Bombay and Madras Army were

mainly from lower castes and they found no enthusiasm to join the revolt that spoke nothing of their age-old agony. British were shrewd enough to grasp this situation and Sir Henry Lawrence had assured Lord Canning of his ability to defend Oudh with troops belonging to the Pasi tribe--an outcast of the Indian society. In October, 1857, Beadon wrote to William Muir, "we must depend entirely on the inferior caste."

If we survey the causes of the failure of the revolt, we find they are of two categories of which one were beyond the control of the rebels, the other was at their disposal. The international supremacy of British and the superiority of her arms which were beyond their control, could be challenged successfully only through more vigorous upsurge of the masses. But the feudal leadership of the revolt could not dare to give such radical drive so that the submerged Indians could rally round this first uprising of the Indian Nationalism. It was foundered mainly at the rock of social justice. Let social justice be the fulcrum of our future progress !



## 1857—ITS NATURE

*( Continued from Page 64 )*

time and date had been fixed for a simultaneous rising at all military stations of India has been challenged by Dr. Sen.

Dr. Sen also aduced evidence that mutiny had no connection with foreign power like Russia, who had been just defeated at Crimea, who naturally might agree to create troubles in India, nor with Persia who looked upon Hindusthan having been conquered by their protege of the Safavis of Iran in the early 16th Century. Naturally, Iran might talk pride that it was her obligation to vindicate the rights of her protege. But, as Dr. Sen says Iran did not respond to the correspondence from India. But an opposite view is held by Dr. Majumder.

Nepal was approached by the rebels after the mutiny and not before. In fact, it was Nepal which practically saved the British because Nepal wanted an ally against the possible pressure from Tibet.

Dr. Sen says, "the movement began as a military mutiny, but it was not everywhere confined to the army." (p. 405)

In fact, about 70,000 sepoys joined the revolt at different times but not simultaneously. Dr. Sen contends that had it been a concerted action, all the sepoys at different centres would have revolted, and the situation would have been graver. Dr. Sen forgot that communication was difficult, native news service was imperfect in the 50s of the 19th. Century.

Was the movement a Hindu one or a Muslim one? Nana Sahib had Azimullah Khan as his right hand,

Lakshmi Bai had her Afghan guards, Bahadur Khan had his trusted lieutenant in Sobharam. Even a few English adventurers had swelled the ranks of the rebels. Sometimes one brother joined the rebels, another brother sided with the English, such as the Raja of Mainpuri fought against the British, his uncle fought for the British. Thus the mutiny was neither Hindu nor Muslim, so says Dr. Sen.

Where did the supporters of the rebels come from? Asked Prof. Susobhan Sarkar in his introduction to Dr. S. B. Chaudhary's *Civil Disturbances during the British Rule*. Was the risings against British authorities outcome of the machinations of mal-contented persons? Of course, some had personal grievances against the British, some had their lands forfeited or pensions denied, some had lost their employments, some were attracted by prospects of plunder and booty—there were a dozen other motives which drew active cooperation, developed passive sympathies for the rebel cause. Dr. Sen categorically said, “outside Oudh and Shahabad there was no evidence of that general sympathy which would invest the Mutiny with the dignity of a national war” ( p. 411 ).

Maulana Sahib writes :—“most of the leaders did not rise against the British till their personal interest had been damaged.” As an evidence Maulana Sahib propounded that “even after the revolt had been declared, if Dalhousie’s decisions were reversed, and his own demands met, Nana would be willing to come to terms. Rani of Jhansi had also her own grievances.” Then, of

course, the Maulana gives a certificate to the Hindu lady, "Once she joined the fight, she never faltered and laid down her life in the cause she espoused". ( p. XV, *Eighteen Fiftyseven* ).

Yet Maulana Sahib says, "it was a national revolt". it was the first War of Independence." Maulana quoted facts which contradict his conclusions.

In the early days of the revolt, troubles were attributed to high caste Hindus. But, on an analysis after the revolt was over, it was formed that low caste man like *Pasis* joined the ranks in Oudh, *Bhils* in Rajputana, and *Santals* in Bihar. In villages, different groups fought some for and others against the rebels. Adventurers joined the rebels to improve their fortunes, as did Mahimji notorious robber, joined the ranks of Tantia Topi's troops. Psychologically one hundred years from 1757 the year of Plassey to 1857 the year of the rising was catchy for the unthinking men on the street.

It is, of course, true that the revolt generally attracted popular support in varying degrees in the principal centres of rebellion from Western Bihar to Eastern Punjab. Actually, in the camps of the Company there were for one *white* twenty *black*. Of 11200 troops at Delhi 7900 were Indians. In Oudh & Rohilkhand, rebels had, undoubtedly, popular support ; and so had Kunwar Singh of Shahabad whose personal popularity, honesty and heroism attracted devoted support from the Rajput peasants of the area. Dr. R. C. Majumder says that Kunwar Singh was at the outset unwilling to join the rebels but in the end 'he had to join'. In Oudh, the

annexation of a loyal state brought to distrust and discontent against the British. The dispossessed *jagirdars* and pension-holders naturally brought passions to a spearhead.

Dr. Sen says, "no moral issues were involved in the war of 1857," though Mr. L. E. R. Lees in his *Personal Narrative*, said, "it was a war of fanatic religionists against Christians." But, as a matter of fact, Christians had crucified Christ in India in order to take revenge for real or supposed grievances against the Indians after the Mutiny.

There is no event to show that the Mutiny vindicated the triumph of civilisation over barbarism. The Christians servants of the Company "showed no consideration for age or sex, guilt or innocence, Hindu or Muslim". Indians, men and women, young and old, rebels and non-combatants had to pay the penalty of their black skin, though "Indian converts thoroughly identified themselves in the ruling nation." Sir W. H. Russel in *Diary in India* said, "even women were not spared at Lucknow the extreme indignity to which her sex can be subjected. Hindu women committed suicide when they were badly used."

Maulana Sahib expressed his suppressed dissatisfaction with the work of Dr. Sen. His clever compliment runs thus—"This history, though based on official records, deals with the struggle in the same spirit as books by other British authors. Only one new point came out in this publication. The author has clearly stated that so far as Oudh was concerned,



the struggle had in it the elements of a national uprising. ....The national character of the rising in Oudh was, however, no new discovery. Lord Canning, in his official despatch, had himself stated that the struggle in Oudh was in a real sense a national uprising. The author had, therefore, no difficulty in repeating what Lord Canning had already admitted." (P. VI. Introduction).

Dr. S. B. Choudhuri in his small but informative volume on the *Civil Disturbances during the British Rule in India* (1765-1857) has shown that from the beginning the *Company Raj* was based on a merciless exploitation of the people. The worst features of the British exploitation were the plantation areas, exclusion of the Indians from all political responsibility in the initial stage of the British Rule; Administration of justice as introduced by the Company involved expense, delay, corruption and uncertainty." Christian Missionaries 'were nothing but agents of imperialist under clergyman's gown'. The arrogance of young British officers, who had no knowledge of Indian traditions and susceptibilities made the local people sullen. Their attitude towards people of a highly cultured and ancient race was cold, selfish, unfeeling, unsympathetic, contemptuous. Thus Indians of every walk of life suffered from chronic disaffections. Dr. Choudhuri says, "very seldom in the years from 1757 to 1857 was the country, free from either civil or military disturbances" ( p. XXII ). ( *See appendix* )

Dr. V. A. Smith in his *Oxford History* also expressed a similar view—when he said, "It is equally certain that the minds of the civil population of all classes and

ranks, Hindus and Muhammadans, princes and people were agitated and disturbed by feelings of uneasiness and vague apprehension. The disturbances of sentiment was not manifested by insurrection as the discontent of the army had been signalised by mutineers." (p. 713).

Sajanikanta Das, an eminent Bengali writer of the 20th Century says, "It would be travesty of truth to glorify the Sepoy Mutiny as a national revolt or as a War of Independence." He argued that the Urdu speaking people of U. P. who are now controlling the affairs and destiny of India after she had become independent, wanted to glorify their contribution to the movement of liberation of the country from the British domination. Das feels that the celebration of the anniversary as a national movement and as the first War of Independence is purposive. Das called in question the observation of Maulana Azad that Hindus and Muslims put up united front against the usurper Company and that they revolted being inspired by unflinching loyalty to Bahadur Shah, the Mughal ruler of Delli.

Das quoted profusely from contemporary and subsequent newspapers, periodicals and books to show that no importance was attached to the Sepoy Mutiny in Bengal by the Bengalees. Even ever it was mentioned, it was just a piece of news and nothing more.

### **Conclusions :—**

**The Prime Minister says :—**

The Mutiny was feudal. There was a lack of national feeling in it.

The Education Minister says :—

The Mutiny was national and it was a War of independence-

Dr. R. C. Majumdar says :—

The Mutiny was anarchy. Idea of War of Independence started with Rammohan, actual war started with Arabinda.

Dr. S. N. Sen says :—

The Mutiny started as a military rising, soon assumed political character when the mutineers of Meerut placed themselves under the King of Delhi. Outside Oudh and Shahabad there is no evidence of that general sympathy which would invest the mutiny with the dignity of a national war.

Sri Sajani Kanta Das says :—

The idea of starting the history of War of Indian Independence with the Mntiny has a similar move of minimising the importance of the contribution of Bangalees, Maharattis & Punjabees to the independence of India. The Sepoy Mutiny was not considered a national revolt nor as a War of Independence in Bengal.

Dr. S. B. Chowdhury says :—

The Mutiny was not "the only instance in which the British rule in India found itself imperilled. The history of British rule in India is the history of ever present danger of many disturbances suppressed."

Each of these remarks is partially true. Every commentator had his own angle of vision and he saw things through his own perspective. The Mutiny was a complex

phenomena, the theatre of the events covered a wide area ; the personalities involved were Hindus, Muslims, Kings, Landlords, Sepoys, adventunturers, bandits & men of all walks of life ; circumstances immediately preceding the outbreak were many and varied. The immediate spark in the conflagration was, of course, the greased cartridges. The duration of the upheaval extended for nearly two years. Naturally new factors & fresh problems cropped up and new approach for solutions adopted.

The remark of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad calls for re-assessment. He says, "The loyalty which the people of India offered to Bahadur Shah was not to him as a person but to the descendant of the Great Moghuls. The Moghul Court had made such an abiding impression on the Indian mind that when the question arose who should take over power from British, Hindus and Muslims with one voice selected Bahadur Shah. This gives us an idea of the deep roots the empire established by Babar and consolidated by Akbar had struck in India. Indians obviously looked up the Moghuls not as foreign rulers but as their own King Emperors".

This seems to be an echo of the claim put forth by the Muslim League on the eve of the withdrawal of the English from India. That is, the English took over the Government of India from the Muslims, if they quit, they should hand it over to the Muslims, more so because both the Hindus and Muslims looked upon the Moghuls as the real rulers of India during the first War of Independence in 1857.

The remark needs no comment.

## APPENDIX

*Chronology of events from Plassey to Sepoy Mutiny  
1757—1857.*

- 1757**—Palassey—Mirjafar made Nawab of Bengal. 1758—Rising of Ram Ram Singh of Midnapur; Ramnarain's opposition at Parwa. 1759—Dacca insurrection. 1760—Mir Qasim made Nawab of Bengal. Azad Zaman Khan of Birbhum and Tilakchand Raja of Burdwan conspired against English from Bengal. 1761—Rise of Haidar Ali. 1762—Sheo Bhatta the Marhatta General & Maharaja Nanda Kumar, Maharaja of Burdwan, Phalwan Singh of Bhojpur—conspiracy to overthrow Company Raj. 176—Expulsion of Mir Qasim. Mirjafar brought back. Rangpur unrest in favour of Mir Qasim by the Faujdar. Mr. Moore, the English agent imprisoned. 1764—Battle of Baxur. Zamindar revolt at Midnapur 1765—Dewani granted to Raydurlava but Clive tricked him out. 1766—Grant of Northern Sarkars to the English. 1767—First Mysore War. 1769—74—Dhalbhum Raja revolted. 1770—Jungle terai, Coochbihar, Ramgur annexed after good deal of opposition. 1773—Sannyasi rebellion, Bengal. 1774—Rohila War. 1775—82—Anglo Maratha War. 1778—81 Oppression of Hounay in Bihar : unrest in Bihar. 1782—Begums of Oudh insulted. 1783—Rebellion at Rangpur. 1789—Rebellion at Bishnupur. 1790—2—Third Mysore War. 1794—Revolt of Vizacram in Madras. 1795—Battle of Kharda.

1796—1805—Revolt of Piche Raja in the South.  
 1799-- Rebellion of Chauras (2) Disturbance in Sylhet  
 (3) Revolt Bednor by Dhundia (4) Revolt of Wazir  
 Ali (5) 4th Mysore War.

**1800**—5—Ganjam revolt. 1801—1—Annexation of  
 Karnatak 2. Poligar unrest in Jinnavali Districts.  
 1802—5—Revolt in ceded districts by Poligar. 1803—  
 5—1) North Arcot trouble by Poligar. 2. Ceylon  
 struggle for independence. 3. Second Anglo Maratha  
 War. 1805—Siege of Bharatpur fails; Ganjam  
 unrest. 1808—12—(1) Rebellion at Bundelkhand;  
 1808-9 Trabancore War of Independence. 3. Sepoy  
 Mutiny at Vellore. 1809—Jat revolt in Hariana  
 near Delta. 1810—11—Commotion in Benaras;  
 Trouble of Abdul Rahaman in Surat. 1812—  
 Bundelkhand trouble. 1813—14—Parlakemedi Estates  
 commotion. Rebellion at Kharda. 1814—16—Anglo  
 Gurkha War 1815—32 Kutch discontent in Western  
 India. 1816—Rebellion at Bereilli. 1817—Occupation  
 of Hathras Fort 2. Revolt in Ahardi in Ceylon. 3.  
 Pindari war 4. Anglo Maratha War of 1818-31  
 1818—Paik rising at Cuttuck 2. Bhil rising in West  
 India. 1820—Rising in Merwara near Ajmer. 1821  
 Jat, Rajput and Maratha risings (1819-21). 1823—  
 Shaikh Dullas rising in Asirgarh and Buhranpur  
 1824—1. Gujar rising 2. Rising at Kittur in Bombay  
 3. Barrakpur Mutiny 4. Bijapur rising under  
 Divakar Dikshit 5. First Burmese War. 1826—1.  
 Revolt at Poona by Ramusis 2. Bharatpur captured.  
 1828-30, 1839, 1844-8—Koli outrages in Western India



1829-33—1) Khasia unrest 2. Rising at Kittur 3. Thagi revolt 4. Thuggi Revolt in Burma. 1830-50—Assam discontent for twenty years 2. 1830-31—Mysore revolution 3. 1830-34—Vijigapattam unrest. 1831—Baraset trouble ; 1831-32 ; Kol rising. 1831-32 ; Revolt in Malacca. 1832—Revolt in Ganga Narayan of Manbhum. 2 Assam Revolt. Jayantiya amajed. 1833—Religious upheaval of Pagalpanthi sect at Sherpur. 1835-7.—Gummsur (near Ganjam) trouble. 1838-47—1) Feraji discontent. 2. Naikhoda rising in Rewa State. 1839—1. Koli outrages in Western India. 2. Afghan War 1839-42, 1840—Rising of Narshijira Duttatraya in Badani Bombay. 1842—Burdila rising under Madhukur and Janahir Singh in Sagar. 1843—1. Conquest of Sind. 2. Gawalior war. 1844-50—1) Kuki unrest. 2. Gadkari rising at Kolhapur. 3. 1844-48—Koli outrage in Western India. 1844-50—Rising in Sabantabadi. 5. Salt riot at Surat. 6. Anglo Sikh War. 7. 34 N I Sepoy rising. 1846—1. Khard uneasiness. 2. 1846-47 Revolt of Narsing Reddi. 1841-9—Rebellion of Appa Sahib in Rajputana. 1849—Anglo Sikh War. Mopla rising in 1849, 1851-2, 1855 in Madras 22 N. 1 Sepoy rising. 1850—2nd Anglo Burmese war. 66 N. 1. Sepoy rising. 1851—Survey riot in Western India 2. Sayyed Rebellion in Hazara. 3. Burma unrest. 4. Bannurchi revolt in Dera Ismile Khan. 1852—Commotion of Hazara valley-38 N. 1 sepoy rising. 1853—1. Revolt Guan ghi in Burma. 2. General unrest in Bombay. 3. Outbreak in Rawalpindi. 4. The Kusranees of South-west Punjab ( Dehra Fatehkhenn ) 1855-6—Santal revolt. 1856—Annexation of Oudh. 1857—Sepoy Mutiny.

# The Reaction of Rebellion in Bengali Mind

*By* Bimal Chandra Sinha

I am not competent to argue about the dates and years of the occurrence of the Sepoy Mutiny as I am not a historian. Nor about its character. Of late, there had been a controversy amongst the scholars whether the Mutiny was the first mass upheaval against foreign rule. But this is not denying the fact that Bengal was not a strong-hold of the mutineers. All the leaders of the revolt Nana Farnabish, Tantia Tope, Rani of Jhansi, Kumar Singh—were active in regions outside Bengal. No doubt the first spark was ignited in Barrackpore and Berhampore, but it was Western and Northern India which was worst affected by the rebellion. And it was the non-Bengali Sepoys who were instrumental in starting it, not Bengalees. Let the historians assess how far the Bengalees responded to the events of those days, but it could be safely asserted that Bengal as a whole kept aloof from the mutiny. In other provinces the dispossessed Landlords and Rajas were in the forefront of the struggle and actively participated in the rebellion ; but in Bengal the situation was different, nay in many cases opposite.

How Calcutta reacted to the news of Sepoy Mutiny could be very well illustrated from quotation from "Hhutum Panchar Naksha."

"Readers ! While loafing about one day, the news

reached us that the non-Bengali Sepoys have revolted. They have selected Nana Sahib as their leader with the intension of dispossessing the British,...Danger indeed ! The city was in turmoil. Anglo-Indians like Idrus, Pidrus, Gomes, Dise etc etc, of Chunagalli and Kasaitolla enrolled themselves as volunteers. European soldiers were posted before the houses of eminent citizens. It is rumoured that Delhi has fallen today, Cawnpore the day before, and one by one like the dices in chess game. Entire North-West India was lost to the rebels. European ladies and small kiddies became victim of cataclysm. The Sahibs, professing to be well-wisher of the Indians (like Hindu God Panchananda) could do nothing against the eldest son, started wreaking vengeance against the youngest son—made the Bengalees victim of their anger instead of the rebellious Sepoy. They requested Lord Canning to dispossess the Bengalees of their arms ( pen knife and pick-axe) ! They started active campaign so that the Bengalees could not get high Government posts, some muslim peons lost their job...The Bengalees, having realised the gravity of the situation held a meeting at the residence of Gopal Mullick where they faithfully explained the Sahibs that even after 160 years of servitude, they are, as of yore, miserable coward Bengalees. Quite a large number of the aristocrats amongst them do not ride on a boat for the fear of drowning. Escorted by their wives and maid-servants they go out to call nature in the night. Their only weapons are table or pen knife and they are afraid of their own shadow. It is impossible for such men to fight."

The above picture of the so-called aristocratic society in Calcutta during the mutiny days clearly illustrates how they reacted. It only shows that they not only remained aloof but betrayed gross cowardice during those turbulent days.

But the society is not composed of aristocrats—there are other classes besides them. In modern society the importance of the educated middle class cannot be ignored. But it is also a fact that under pressing circumstances the educated class is not the only vanguard. May be that the aristocrats did not rise to the occasion at that time, but why others remained silent. Their participation could have made the rebellion a real people's movement. But there are no records or evidences to show that they behaved otherwise.

It is better to admit frankly that the Sepoy Mutiny was not a movement in which Bengalees played a conspicuous role. In truth Bengalees failed to show any enthusiasm. [ If whole of India had risen in rebellion and the Marhattas, Sikhs and others could unite then the history of the rebellion would have been different c. f. Tagore's "History" ] Why the Mutiny failed to evoke expected response. Let us discuss the reason thereof.

As there was no stirring in Bengal, it should not be taken that Bengal was happy under the British rule or that the Bengalees as a race were cowards. I believe the reasons lie elsewhere.

At the outset it needs to be emphasised that of all the provinces in India opposition to British rule was strongest in Bengal. I am not speaking of the leaders but of

people in Bengal. The leadership of these opposition rested entirely on the shoulders of common men. No Rajahs, Zaminders or leading citizens of community stood in the forefront of the struggle. Let us take the case of Rangpur revolt of 1783. The Maharajah of Dinajpur was dead by the time—tyranny of Debi Sinha showed no sign of abating. Mr. Goodland was the Collector but he remained a passive spectator [ Please refer to Chandi Ch. Sen's "Dewan Gangagobinda Sinha in this connection. The book Civil disturbance during the British rule in India (1735-1856) is also useful. ]

The rebellion started in 1783 and continued for nearly a month. The rebels selected their own Nabab and started the fight. In spite of repeated threats administered by Mr. Goodlan the rebels remained nonchalant. Ultimately the rebellion was suppressed. But the Government of India was forced to appoint an Enquiry Commission to enquire into the cause of the revolt. The Commission was forced to admit that it was due to inhuman tyranny of Debi Sinha that the discontent broke itself into open rebellion. It was followed by the Bishnupur rebellion in 1789. Angry people stormed into the Government treasury and looted it. Then occurred the Choard rebellion in 1799. The British Government stopped the annual subsidy of the paiks, the virile and turbulent class who fought with lances, shields and lathis. They even lost their land. But these brave people did not acquiesce to their fate. They fought against the injustice valiantly. Many people in the surrounding areas joined them. Times without numbers Midnapur

city was attacked and countless number of time army expeditions were sent to suppress these paiks. Only historians know that how on many occasions the Magistrate of Midnapur had to look forward with eager anxiety for military aid. The implications of these revolts are never discussed or analysed as they should be. From the records of the Midnapur Collectory it was revealed that much effort was needed to suppress the revolt. Mr price wrote, "All the evil passions of the infuriated sardars and paiks burst forth in a wild attempt to revenge the resumption of jaigir lands on the Government, if not to compel it to order a complete restoration of them." The revolt was not entirely, infructuous. The Government was forced temporarily to suspend the requisition of "paik" land. In this connection mention may be made of the revolt of Tiu Mir in 1831 in Barasat, though of very short duration.

This was how history was taking shape. The picture would be more complete if we take into account the revolts that took place in the adjoining areas of Bengal. In fact the area of Bengal was much wider. Moreover, Chhotanagpur and Santal Parganas were never part of Bihari society. They were more akin to Bengal socially and racially. So if we take into account the revolts of 1831-32, or Ganganarain riots of 1832 in Manbhum, Sherpur rebellion of the Pagalpanthies in 1833 or Santal rebellion in 1855-56, we would notice that these brave and virulent people died a slow death at the hand of a powerful imperialist power in their courageous attempt at rebellion.

It is evident that the people of Bengal grew exhaus-



ted after prolonged struggle against British rule when Sepoy Mutiny broke out. Let us discuss the position of other classes in Bengal during the mutiny. There was no notable Zanindar or King in Bengal during the intervening period of decline of Mughal Empire and the ascendancy of the British power. There was none who could remotely be compared to Rani of Jhansi, Nawab of Oudh or the last descendents of Marhatta ruling confederacy. The new five or ten years of Zamindary system introduced by the British ruler completely pauperised most of the Zamindars. There were few who could command universal respect or social prestige to take the rein of leadership. Before their very eyes, people could see that this class was gradually deprived of their power, wealth and command and reduced to complete impotency. The real power was weilded by the 'Rairayans' and Collectors and the Zamin-dars were mere puppets. Their private armies (*paiks*) were disbanded and their Zamindarees confiscated without compensation. Utimately their status was not better than collectors of land revenue. Most of the Zaminderees existant, save a few notable exceptions, owe their existence to the British rulers. The new class of Zamindars were content with their present status—they were not humiliated by the British rulers as their counterparts in the West. in fact, they owe their power, position and wealth due to the advent of British rule.

It was impossible for other classes to participate in the upri-ing except for these Zamindars. Looking into the history, such classes could be divided into 4 or 5 broad categories. Trading class of Bengalees belong to first

category. It is said that ships owned by Ramdulal Sarker made regular business voyages to Atlantic. In later periods many Bengalees flourished in business, but their enterprises were not so individualistic in character. As a result a large number of business firms owned jointly by the Bengalees and the Britishers were established and we hear such business houses like Car-Tagore Co. etc. There was a fusion of British and Bengali capital. But the result of the fusion was elimination of Bengalees from active partnership. The main business remained under the control of the Englishmen and the Bengalees had to remain content with becoming mutsudees or benyan. A compromise was effected and business became complementary instead of competitive. With the introduction of Managing Agency system even that influence began to wane. But the English businessmen even refused to tolerate such participation, though on a much smaller scale than previously, in business. The number of Bengalees, who acted as banyans to many English business houses gradually shrank. At about this time a new class made its appearance—a class whose profession was service. They held petty or big jobs, ranging from lowly clerks to magistrates. While the influence of businessmen began to wane, the new class of white colour workers correspondingly gained in influence. After passing through this phase for a long time at last we have reached dead end. This class, once renowned for their efficiency in classical works finds its profession very tough going indeed. But that's besides the point. The most pertinent fact was that the upper strata of Bengali society

was materially benefitted from the British rule in some way or other. There were no powerful groups comparable to those of Rani of Jhansi or Nana Sahab who were smarting under indignities and insults inflicted on them by alien rulers.

In addition the Bengali mind was powerfully impressed by the impact of western culture irrespective of misdeeds of British imperialism. No other province accepted the essence of western culture so early as the Bengalees. There were powerful protests against tyranny of foreign rule, (Protests by Indian Association) yet the upper classes in Bengal thought it wise to accept western science and culture rather than remain in perpetual ignorance under old antiquated social order. Since the days of Ram Mohan Roy this trend was marked in Bengal. It is well-known that in the 19th Century educated class in Bengal accepted and absorbed that was best in the western science, culture and scholarship. Even Tagore had hinted that after following the speeches and writings of eminent Englishmen like John Bright, we are led to believe, in spite of British misdeeds in India, that we could expect justice and fairplay from some large-hearted Englishmen. "In his crises of Civilization" Tagore wrote eloquently. In the beginning I had believed that springs of civilization would issue out of heart of Europe, but when I am about to quit this world that faith has gone bankrupt altogether." It was, therefore, not surprising that those who came in contact with the western, science, culture and civilization, were its deep admirers though hating the colonial. The

atmosphere of disillusionment did not grow at that time.

While analysing the events of Sepoy Mutiny and the attitude of the then Bengalees, several pertinent factors assume added significant. Firstly, the factors which led to the conflagration in northern and western India were absent in Bengal. Secondly, Bengal was under the impact of peculiar circumstances. While the common men were exhausted after a prolonged struggle against imperialism, the aristocracy in Bengal developed and benefitted from the contacts of British Imperialism. Even those who stood little chance to gain materially from British rule were deeply impressed by the European civilization and culture. They were so imbued with the European culture and ideas, that they did little foreshadow the shape of imperialism in future. It was, therefore, not surprising that the intellect of Bengal failed to respond, even emotionally, to the call of Mutiny.

Dr. Suren Sen while discussing the factors leading to Mutiny remarked that the prohibition of 'Sati Daha' or widow burning was one of the reasons for discontentment of the Indian people. But many eminent Bengalees initiated moves to ban 'Sati Daha'. The protests of Sepoys against the use of greased cartridges sparked the flame of rebellion. But long before, the members of Young Bengal Society ate beef publicly as a symbol of defiance.

It is not my intention to judge and evaluate the character of the Sepoy Mutiny. Many people wanted to belittle the significance of the Mutiny. I differ with

them. Every rebellion has some significance. Several factors combine to spark a rebellion. Revolution and mere rebellion are totally different in character and viewed on that perspective Sepoy Mutiny was not a mass upheaval. But I believe such controversies are futile. We would be denying history, if we presume that mass uprising comparable to present times could take place during a period when mass awakening was not a feasible phenomenon. That is why Rabindranath showed great respect for the leaders of the Mutiny. "Tantia Topi and Kumar Sinha were not mere two unknown rebels. Their names should be enshrined along with the great heroes of the world.....We could mention many individuals whose names would have been immortalised in the pages of history, poems, sculpture and music had they been born in Europe." But like true historian Rabindranath also remarked that even history fails its purpose. When an idea endeavours to win the mind of a nation it cannot succeed in its purpose if it is confined to few intellectuals. We must have necessary ammunition to spread the spark into conflagration. (Vide Tagore's essay on Shivaji and Guru Gobinda Singha). However powerful the spark may, be unless there is necessary fuse, it cannot burn indefinitely.

As the Mutiny failed to evoke necessary response it should not be assumed that necessary ingredients were not present in Bengal. It was there, but its character was different. And this is the main contention of the article. We have already mentioned previously that

the British Imperialism had to expend much of their energy for nearly half a century to curb mass uprising and protests in Bengal. None of the leaders of the revolts were outstanding personalities or they were not aimed at restoring lost prestige or wealth. They were ordinary men like Titu Mir or Bir Birsha. The aristocrats of Bengal did not participate in these revolts. But new movements started in Bengal before long the Sepoy Mutiny was forcibly suppressed. The ordinary people protested against tyranny of Indigo planters and the writers and journalists echoed the same sentiment. Simultaneously the upper class first time expressed their resentment against alien rule based upon their growing historical consciousness. This deep emotion found its first wide spread expression in Bengal and Bengal took up all India leadership. History created Bengal to fulfil this unique responsibility. So if Bengal did not respond to the last uprising of the past, it was not because she was lacking in initiative or consciousness ; the reason was that she was always progressive in outlook, looking forward and not reactionary, looking backward.





## WHY 1857 WAR WAS A NATIONAL WAR ?

*( Continued from page 32 )*

subjects. It will, therefore, be useful to put through the current journalistic writing periodically authentic and essential information. That revolutionary war should not be improperly under-estimated ; nor should it be unduly apotheosised by the public. With this aim in view, I have given some brief references, that can be accommodated in the span of a news paper article. These pertain to what the revolutionist themselves had said about their aims and also what the British historians on the other side have to say about it.

If it was a mutiny merely of soldiers enraged by the cartridges and dissatisfied owing to grievances about pay, promotions and conditions of service confined only to people in the military, then people raging from rulers like Nana Saheb, the Rani of Jhansi, Bahadur Shah and Kunwar Singh down to hundreds of thousands of non-military civilians, would not have come forward to fight against the British at the risk of their lives. These hundreds of thousands of people outside the military were not subjected to compulsion in the matter of breaking open the cartridges and the deficiencies in pay and emoluments. Again it should be borne in mind that when thousands of soldiers refused to use the cartridges and march in deadly revolt, the British authorities had climbed down to the position of promulgating the withdrawal of the order to use those cartridges. Even thereafter the soldiers refused to lay down their arms and call off the fight. On

the other hand, they raised the cry that they aimed at nothing short of overthrowing the British rule to preserve their religion and freedom and under the leadership of Indian rulers like Nana Saheb and aided by thousands of revolutionaries from the common people at places like Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Gwalior and Jagdishpur continued their fight. The celebrated English historian Justice MacCarthy in his well known 'History of Our Own Times' published in three volumes, taking into consideration all these circumstances, writes :—

“It was not alone the Sepoy who rose in revolt—it was not by any means a merely military mutiny. It was a combination of military grievances, national hatred and religious fanaticism against the English occupation of India. The Mohamedan and the Hindu forget their old religious antipathies to join against the Christian. Hatred and panic were the stimulants of that great rebellious movements.

The quarrel about the greased cartridges was but the chance-spark flung in among all the combustible material. If that spark had not lighted it some other would have done the work...The Meerut sepoys found in a mement, a leader, a flag and a cause and the Mutiny was transformed into a revolutionary war. When the Meerut sepoys reached Jamuna, glittering in the morning light, they had all unconsciously seized one of the great critical moments of history and converted a military mutiny into a national and religious war.”

In this the British historian clearly admitted that the War of 1857 was waged by hundreds of thousands of

revolutionaries against the British for the protection of their religion and for regaining their political liberty.

The extensive history written by Charles Ball in two parts has been well received by the English reading public. About the speed, animosity and unexpected proportions with which that revolution spread over the whole of North India he writes :—

“At length, the torrent overflowed the banks, and saturated the normal soil of India. It was then expected that those waves would overwhelm and destroy the entire European element and that, when the torrent of rebellion should again confine itself within bounds, patriotic India, freed from its alien rulers, would bow only to the independent sceptor of native prince. The movement, now, assumed a more important aspect. It became the rebellion of a whole people incited to outrage by resentment for imaginary wrong and sustained in their delusions by hatred and fanaticism.”

It was not an army insurrection, it was a popular revolt. In a way Charles Ball has estimated this war of freedom higher than the estimation in my own book. I had named it only as a “National War of Independence.” But the English historian in the extract reproduced above, taken up by the fitful spirit of fearless and truthful definition of history, has in definite words noted that the upheaval in the army at Meerut expanded till “It became the rebellion of a whole people.” The revolutionary rising against the British became in fact a people’s war.

In this people’s war, people both in the army and in civil life took arms not only against the particular British

cartridges dipped in pig fat but also against British rule itself. Everyone whether living in a palace or a cottage, was in his own way helping this revolutionary struggle. Charle Ball has asserted this in his book after examining witnesses from British Officers and soldiers who had participated in the war. He writes :—

“(The rebel forces) were strengthened and encouraged to an inconceivable degree by the sympathy of their country men. They could march without commissariat, for the people would always feed them. They could leave their baggage without guard, for the people would not attack it. They were always certain of their position and that of the British, for the people brought them hourly information. And no (British) design could be possibly kept from them while there secret sympathisers stood round every mess-table and waited in almost every tent in the British camp. No surprise could be effected but by a miracle, while rumour, communicated from mouth to mouth outstripped even our cavalry.”\*

This fine description of the offers by common people of sympathetic active support and voluntary contribution to the revolutionaries is not applicable merely to Oudh. In places like Delhi, Meerut, Kanpur, Kalpi, Gwalior Jhansi, Jagadishpur, Benaras or Hushangabad, wherever the camps of the revolutionary army were located and marches and manoeuvres were undertaken one after the other, the fighters were welcomed with enthusiasm as liberators and crusaders for religious protection.

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\*“History of Indian Mutiny vol. II page-572.

People also came forward to help and co-operate openly or secretly with the astute leaders of the revolution like Nana Saheb, Raosaheb, Senapati Tantya Tope, Rani of Jhansi, Rana Kanwar Singh and Maulavi Ahmed Shah.

Intelligent readers will not fail to discover a strange inconsistency in both the eminent British historians quoted above. Justice MacCarthy who presents a true perspective of the nature and causes of that war and clearly gives it the noble character of a national and religious war, condemns in the same breath, patriotic fervour of the revolutionaries as racial hatred of the British and their religious pride as fanaticism. He does not stop to inquire whether the objection taken by thousands of soldiers to the cartridges alleging that they were smeared with cows' and pigs' fat had any foundation or not. Nor does he care to answer the question whether the British rule which the patriotic revolutionaries sought to overthrow, was really oppressive or not.

Charles Ball too, while evincing a comparatively faithful historical spirit by correctly calling it a people's war and a national uprising in the quotation given above and also at other places in his book, names it a "History of Indian Mutiny"—a name contradicting his own conclusions in the book.

The reason for this strange inconsistency is obvious. Even the better type of British historians can reveal truth only to the extent that would not compromise their partisanship of the British Empire. The two

British historians quoted above and almost all other British historians have invariably regarded the grievance of the revolutionaries as "imaginary".

Take for instance the particular grievance with regard to the smearing of the cartridges with cows' or pigs' fat and the compulsion of tearing them open with their teeth, which the soldiers refused to do and rose in revolt instead. All British officers, Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief along with all British historians for nearly three or four decades after the event, have consistently denied the allegation of smearing the cartridges with cows' and pigs' fat as false and ridiculed the Indian soldiers' objections as sheer madness. But it was not an imaginary grievance. It was a fact and the British officers were determined to impose the condition that the cartridges must be ripped open with their teeth by Indian soldiers. I have given in my book a number of recorded statements by British officers testifying to that fact. For the sake of brevity I give below only two from amongst them :

Says Kaye—"There is no question that the beef fat was used in the composition of this tallow"\*

Lord Robert says—"The recent researches of Mr. Forest in the records of the Government of India prove that the lubricating mixture used in preparing the cartridges was actually composed of the objectionable ingredients, cows' fat and lard, and that incredible

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\*History of the Indian Mutiny, Vol. I. p-389



disregard of the soldiers' religious prejudices was displayed in the manufacture of these cartridges."\*

As the Britishers hold on India was firmly established, Christian Church had conspired to strengthen that hold by converting the entire country to Christianity and to use even force for it, if it became necessary. Further it cannot be denied that the British rulers were also involved in the conspiracy. In the fifth chapter of my book I have collected and presented a number of proofs for this. Those who are keen on the study should refer to them and the original sources from which they have been taken.

Some Indian regiments were faced with British artillery and the soldiers were ordered to open with their teeth the cartridges smeared with cows' and pigs' fat. If they refused they were ordered to surrender their arms. In some cases they were immediately put in fetters and sent to prison. This religious persecution was becoming unbearable. It is a fact that in some instances soldiers were dismissed from service and driven out from the army as soon as they refused to obey this order. On the parade grounds, after parade British Military officers condemned the Hindu and Muslim faiths and urged the soldiers to embrace Christianity. Those few who became Christians were immediately given promotions superceding the claims of the other Hindu and Muslim soldiers. Even in Civil Departments, Christianity was being propagated in the presence of British officers. These and other methods of the propagation of Christianity have been recorded by contemporary British

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\*Roberts—Forty Years in India, P. 431

authors with a sense of pride ! The Governor-General and Commanders-in-Chief were aware of these things and convinced at them with obvious motives. Governor-General Lord Canning must have given lakhs of rupees to aid Missionaries.

In a newspaper article like the present I have selected only two quotations for the general reader.

Rev. Kennedy a leading Christian Missionary of those days wrote as follows :

“Whatever misfortunes come on us as long as our Empire in India continues...so long our chief work must be the propagation of Christianity until—Hindusthan from Capecomorin to the Himalayas embraces the religion of Christ and until it condemns of the Hindu and Muslim religions, our efforts must continue persistently. We must use all the power and all the authority in our hands .....until India becomes the bulwark of Christianity in the East.”

The East India Company held the power in India in those days. Mr. Maugels, the Chairman of the Directors of the East India Company who was as important as a Governor spoke in 1857 in the house of commons. He said :—

“Providence has entrusted the extensive Empire of Hindustan to England in order that the banner of Christ should wave triumphant from one end of India to the other (We must exert to complete) the grand work of making all India Christian”.

Lord Dalhausie started the proces of eliminating the rule of Indian rulers. The remaining vestiges of power

in the Indian States were being destroyed and the helpless general public was so much harassed by Missionaries and British officers for the sake of converting them, that everybody from the rulers to the tillers of the soil was filled with the anxiety for survival of their religion. The efforts of conversion were concentrated on the military with the idea that one the army was Christianised all Indian would become Christians in no time. Indian soldiers raised their arms in exasperation owing to these efforts.

Nearly about fifty thousand Indian soldiers participated in the war. None of them had made at any time demands for increase in pay, shortening hours of work or extending holidays etc., confined to their material well-being. With one voice they were out for the overthrow of rulers belonging to a foreign country and professing a foreign religion. It was, therefore, purely a war in defence of faith. Those rulers who were deposed by the British and who were valiant enough to risk their lives for this war, were selected by the soldiers as their leaders. Along with these leaders they declared **a free Indian Raj.**

Nearly about a hundred, thousand people took part in this war in defence of religion and freedom. Nearly twentyfive thousand Britishers lost their lives. The British rulers were taken aback and the Queen declared her assurance to the people of India that British ruler would no longer interfere in the religion of Indians. The British rule thereafter avoided tempering in religious matters of the Indians. A great religious calamity

slightly less harmful than the one which India had to face under Aurangzeb, was thus avoided. This much is said about the common people and their aims in this war as they themselves expressed. Let us now turn to the leaders and find out what they testify.

A Brahmin priest by name of Vishnubhat Godse was in the tumultuous days of 1857 travelling in the Gwalior territory. His book entitled "My Travels" (in Marathi) contains reliable information about the war of 1857. He was for some time living under the patronage of the Rani of Jhansi, and knew her well. After the fall of Jhansi, the Rani breached the besieging British forces and managed to escape to Kalpi. There in a battle with the British the batch of fighters lead by the Rani were routed. The people were running away from the battle. The traveller Vishnubhat Godse writes about his own experiences in his Marathi book as follows : "Early one morning in the midst of this fight we were sitting on the plinth of a well. Four or five people were seen running by the side. We saw the Rani of Jhansi amongst them. She was dressed like a Pathan and dust was all over her body. She was very thirsty. She recognised me and alighted from horseback. I took a rope and an earthen pot to take out water from the well. While I was doing so the Rani said, "you are a learned Brahman, you should not do the work of pulling out water for me. I will do it myself." She took out water and quenched her thirst using the palms of her hand. Then in a mood of despair imprinted on her face said, "I am entitled as a widow to half a seer of rice (maintenance). I had no necessity to

leave my widow's duty for these endeavours. But I was prompted to undertake it with regard for Hindu Dharma. For that sake I renounced wealth, life and everything else." These are the actual words from the Rani of Jhansi herself.

Like Nana Saheb his nephew Rao Saheb Peshwa was a fighter and skilled in riding. Both of them were often seen in the thick of the battle. At times when men of the Peshwa artillery would hesitate to answer the artillery of the British, Rao Saheb was seen rushing on horseback and lighting the match to bombard the enemy. Even after the fall of Gawalior, he had under his command and army from twenty to thirty thousand. He levied tribute on rulers of Jaipur and other places as he marched northward. Shri Vishnubhat Godse travelled along with this army. Rao Saheb Peshwa sent a letter to the Raja of Bundkot. The letter said :—"We are fighting against the English for Hindu Dharma. You should therefore pay a contribution tribute of two lakhs of Hones (coins)." The Raja replied "The English have levied tribute to on us. If you drive them out we shall pay it to you." Thereafter a battle between them ensued and the Raja being defeated fled for his life. Rao Saheb and Tantya Tope entered the palace and took possession of the Raja's treasury. The Queen, Queen-mother and other ladies of the palace closed themselves in the upper rooms and would not stir out for fear. Rao Saheb went there and addressed them from outside. "The queen mother is like my own mother" he said, "All ladies of the palace should come out without fear. We have deliberately started

this campaign for Hindu Dharma, at the risk of our lives. The British army people also turned against them for Hindu Dharma and joined us. All the kings and rulers have helped us with money. We demanded money from you likewise. We do not want your kingdom.”

The Peshawa took the money but installed on the throne the young prince with due ceremony and left the palace with his army. The whole incident has been recorded by Godse in his book.

At the close of the war, when the English recaptured Oudh, the revolutionary army of about sixty thousand led by Nana Saheb and the Begum of Oudh fought their way towards Nepal. They did not pay any attention to British Queen's proclamation of amnesty. Rana Jung Bahadur the Commander of Nepal's forces had sent his regiment to aid the British. Before entering Nepal with revolutionary army Nana Saheb sent a letter to Jung Bahadur, which has been reproduced by Charles Ball in his book.

In this letter after describing the political situation round about Nana Saheb wrote :—

“It is utterly unnecessary to repeat here the well-known story of the wrongs under which Hindustan is groaning how the British have broken treaties, trampled down their policies, snatched away the crowns of the Indian Rajas. It is equally unnecessary to describe how even the religion of the land is threatened as soon as the kingdoms of the land are destroyed. It is for this reason that this war is waged.”

This clearly indicates that Nana Saheb was out to



protect religion. The letter was sealed with the seal of the Peshwa. The Rana of Nepal sent Colnel Balbhadra Sing for talks with the revolutionary leaders. The leaders according to Charless Ball addressed Balbhadra Singh as follows :

"We have fought for the Hindu Dharma. Maharaja Jung Bahadur is a Hindu and therefore, he should help us. If he gives his help or, even if he orders his officers to lead us, we shall again dash on Calcutta we shall feed ourselves and still shall obey your orders. Whatever country we conquer in fight will become the possession of the Gurkha Government. If this also is not possible at least let him give asyln in his country and we will live under his orders"—Col. Balabhadra Singh asked the revolutionary leaders to surrender their arms as the British had offered amnesty. The revolutionary leaders replied as follows —

"We have heard of the proclamation. But we have no wish that some of our brothers should save their lives at the expense of others. Maharaja Jungbahadur is a Hindu and we do not want to fight against the Hindu Gurkhas. If we want we shall throw down our arms before him and even if we are not be murdered we submit to him unresistingly. But how can we submit to the British ?"

In this way they offered to surrender to the Maharaja of Nepal because he was a Hindu. They, however, refused to surrender to the British in any event.

After this the British threatened Nana Saheb and

his followers that they would be massacred if they do not surrender.

Nana Saheb send his reply to the British Commander Hope Grant. After bitterly condemning the political religious injustice of the Britishers, Nana Saheb further says in this letter :—

“What right have you to occupy India and declare me an outlaw? Who gave you right to rule over India? What! you Firanghees, the King! and we theives in our own country?” These words are the last recorded words the religious hero, Nana Saheb the last of the Peshwas.

If the general public is acquainted with the evidence quoted in this article it will convince them that the revolutionary war of 1857 was a war for religious and political freedom. They will be able also to argue the point with others on the strength of this evidence. For even at present a few people like Dr. Muzumder blame my book and maintain that 1857 war was merely a mutiny of fanatic and superstitious sepoys. But Dr. P. N. Mukherjee from Bengal who is a well-known keen scholar has answered Dr. Muzumder conclusively in his article on the subject in the *Modern Review* of February 1956. In the very first paragraph of this article Dr. P. N. Mukherjee writes :—

“The Mutiny of 1857-58 has been characterised by almost all the British Historians as a ‘Sepoy-Mutiny’ indicating that it was not a national war of independence at all. Some of them have even expressed that opinion openly and in unmistakable terms. This British theory

was first successfully challenged by Mr. V. D. Savarkar, the great Hindu Mahasabha leader in his worthy book—*The Indian War of Independence—1857 (1909)*”

It is indeed a matter of gratification that the theory which I propounded fifty years back for the first time in my book and which was then accepted only by a few scholars and ardent young men, has now been acclaimed as a nationally accepted proposition and the entire nation is celebrating the centenary of the War of Independence of 1857 with gratitude.

### **Thus fought Jhanshi-ki-Ranee**

Immediately, the beautiful Ranee went over the field and made a firm stand against the array of Sir Hugh Rose. She was wearing an embroidered Chandeni turban, a tamamee clock and pyjamas. A pearl necklace was round her neck.

The Ranee led her troops to make repeated and fierce attacks and, though her ranks were pierced through and were gradually becoming thinner and thinner, the Ranee was seen in the foremost rank, rallying her shattered troops and performing prodigies of valour. But all this was of no avail. The Camel corps, pushed up by Sir Hugh Rose person,—broke her last line, still the dauntless and heroic Ranee held her own.”

—An English Writer's View

## '1857' Landmarks

**May 9, 1857:** Courtmarshalling of 85 sepoy of a regiment at Meerut for refusing to touch greased cartridges, sepoy sentenced to 10 years' R. I. **10:** Three regiments at Meerut revolt, imprisoned sepoy freed and regiments march to Delhi. **11:** Delhi captured by sepoy, Bahadur Shah proclaimed Emperor. **13-31:** Rising spreads to Ferozepur. Muzaffarnagar, Aligarh, Naushera Etawah, Mainpuri, Roorkee, Etah, Nasirabad, Mathura, Lucknow, Bareilly and Shahjahanpur.

**June 1-5:** Rising Moradabad, Badaun, Azamgarh, Sitapur, Neemuch, Benaras, Kanpur and Jhansi. **6:** Nana Saheb lays siege to Kanpur. **7-8:** Jhansi fort captured, Rani Lakshmi Bai restored to power, battle of Badli Sarai and occupation of the Ridge near Delhi by British. **9-18:** Rising in Dariabad, Fatehpur, Nowgong, Gwalior and Fategarh. **26-27:** Kanpur falls to Nana Saheb.

**July 1:** Rising in Hathras and Indore. **12:** Defeat of Nana Sahib's troops under Jwala Prasad and Tikka Singh at Fategarh. **16:** Battle of Kanpur, retreat of Nana Saheb's forces to Bithur. **27:** Capture of Arrah by Kunwar Singh.

**August 3:** Relief of Arrah by British. **13:** Defeat of Kunwar Singh at Jagadishpur. **16:** Tantia Topi defeated Bithur.

**September 14:** Kashmiri Gate at Delhi blown up by British. **19:** Lahori Gate bastion at Delhi secured by British. **20:** Recapture of Delhi by British. **21:** Bahadur Shah surrenders to the British at Humayun's tomb. **22:** Arrest and shooting of sons of Bahadur Shah.

**October 23:** British retake Lucknow after breaking through Sikandar Bagh. **26:** Tantia Topi defeated on

the banks of Pandu. **27:** Tantia Topi dislodges the British from Kanpur and captures it.

**December 6:** Tantia Topi dislodged by Cambell from Kanpur, Tantia joins Lakshmi Bai. **9:** Battle of Kalpi, retreat of Tantia Topi.

**March 5, 1858:** Mehndi Hussain and the Rajas of Gonda and Chardah attack British camp at Chanda. **21:** Lucknow brought under complete control by the British. **22:** Kunwar Singh captures Azamgarh.

**April 1:** Tantia Topi, arriving with 22,000 men to aid Lakshmi Bai is routed by the British on the bank of the Betwa. **3-5:** Storming of Jhansi by British, Jhansi fort falls. Lakshmi Bai flees, Kunwar Singh defeats British at Azamgarh a second time. **23:** Kunwar Singh scores yet another victory against the British at Jagdishpur. **26:** Death of Kunwar Singh.

**May 6:** Capture of Bareilly by British from Bahadur Khan. **11:** British lay siege to Shahjahanpur defended by Maulvi Ahmed Shah. **22:** Second battle of Kalpi—Lakshmi Bai, Nawab of Banda and Rao Saheb (nephew of Nana Saheb) lead the attack. **24:** Kalpi falls to the British.

**June 1:** Rani Lakshmi Bai, Rao Saheb and Nawab of Banda defeat Scindia of Gwalior, capture Gwalior and proclaim Nana Saheb Peshwa. **17:** British lay siege to Gwalior. Lakshmi Bai killed in action at Gwalior, Tantia Topi flees. **20:** British recapture Gwalior.

**August 14:** Battle of Kotra (Udaipur) and defeat of Tantia Topi.

**October 17-19:** British lay siege to Jagdishpur defended by Amar Singh, brother of Kunwar Singh, Amar Singh defeated at Nanedi.

**January 21, 1859:** Battle of Sikhar, defeat of Tantia Topi.

**April 7:** Tantia Topi betrayed and made prisoner  
**18:** Tantia Topi hanged.

## Acknowledgement

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- (iii) Why 1857 War was a National War ?  
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- (iv) Causes of Indian war of Independence  
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- (v) 1857—Some Reflections  
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- (vi) Mutiny day's in Calcutta  
by Courtesy of the "Calcutta Municipal Gazette".
- (vii) How Sepoy Mutiny reacted in Russia  
by courtesy of "The Advance", Kanpur.
- (viii) The reaction of rebellion in Bengali mind  
by courtesy of "The Anandabazar Patrika".

The editor also owe a debet of gratitude to many who have contributed readily and in good measure to the making of this Souvenir.



## *Publisher's Note*

It is a noble cause for which the people of India fought hundred years ago. And it is for that befitting cause this Souvenir is published. We felt it our duty to focuss the points which culminated in this great uprising. We were, from the very beginning, well aware that this sort of venture seldom proves commercially successful. Neither we had, at any time, any intention of milking money out of it. We decided previously to allot a limited space for advertisers just to cover the cost of publication to some extent. Accordingly we invited advertisements and a good number of National Advertisers responded to our call favourably. But we had our other well-wishers too, in the form of our contributors and the discerning people in general. Good counsel advised us to abandon the idea of incorporating advertisements in this Souvenir and publish a book which will speak of War of Independence and War of Independence alone. Good counsel always prevails and we could not but concede to it.

In separate letters to all our advertisers—who had already booked space or were in the process of booking—we extended our regret explaining the whole position clearly and we are now proud to announce that most of them immediately and gladly reciprocated our sentiments. We take this opportunity to acknowledge their deep sympathy, co-operation and gesture of goodwill towards our little venture.

